

## ABSTRACT

Title of Document: ASSESSING THE PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY AT THE EARLY CHILDHOOD LEVEL IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO.

Lenisa N Joseph, Doctor of Philosophy, 2014

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This study examined the implementation of inclusive education at the early childhood level in Trinidad and Tobago. Subjects included officials from the Ministry of Education and teachers who are involved in implementation of the policies for children at early childhood centers. I used qualitative methodology in order to best assess inclusive education implementation process at the early childhood level using the implementation framework of Fixsen et al (2005) and the UNESCO (2005) guidelines for inclusive education. Using a combination of data collection methods I assessed from senior ministry officials and teachers at pilot schools how the implementation of inclusive education at the early childhood level was progressing.

The written documents of the former government used to access loans for the initiative reflects use of all three drivers of the Fixsen framework. The actual implementation was affected by the lack of a sufficient number of teachers required for the initiative. In addition the former government lost the election during the early stages of implementation and changes at the Ministerial level resulted in alterations in implementation plans. The current government has not continued the same inclusive

education model. The findings are reflective of what can happen when new education initiatives are attempted using a top down approach without sufficient infrastructure. As this is often the case in many developing countries, it leads to gaps between policies and their implementation. The study also indicates the need for ensuring that there are resources at the ground level and sustained support and technical assistance in order for countries to successfully implement inclusive education policies.

ASSESSING THE PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION  
POLICY AT THE EARLY CHILDHOOD LEVEL IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

by

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## Dedication

### I Have a Dream

I have a dream, a song to sing  
To help me cope with anything  
If you see the wonder of a fairy tale  
You can take the future even if you fail  
I believe in angels  
Something good in everything I see  
I believe in angels  
When I know the time is right for me  
I'll cross the stream - I have a dream

I have a dream, a fantasy  
To help me through reality  
And my destination makes it worth the while  
Pushing through the darkness still another mile  
I believe in angels  
Something good in everything I see  
I believe in angels  
When I know the time is right for me  
I'll cross the stream - I have a dream  
I'll cross the stream - I have a dream

I have a dream, a song to sing  
To help me cope with anything  
If you see the wonder of a fairy tale  
You can take the future even if you fail  
I believe in angels  
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I believe in angels  
When I know the time is right for me  
I'll cross the stream - I have a dream  
I'll cross the stream - I have a dream

Westlife (2000)

*To all the angels (celestial and earthly) who shepherd me along this earthly sojourn.  
May your wings always flutter giving beautiful sounds of praise and glory to God as you  
allow His will to be accomplished in you and through you.*

With great love to the **Stein Angels**: Matt, Nicole, David, Daniel, and Lilly &  
**Fitzpatrick Angels**: Martin, Christina, Oliver and Colin

*To my angels who have transitioned into another life, I pray that you heard the "words  
well done my child, well done," and now joined the celestial choir in praising in God.*

I especially dedicate this work to **Ansley Titus** and **Amy Tetteh Griffin**.  
Funny you did not know each other but you both loved African drumming and dancing.  
May the work you started for persons with disabilities continue through the lives you  
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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Inclusion, from United Nation's Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) perspective, entails the process of addressing and responding to the diverse needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures, communities, and the reduction of exclusion within and from education (UNESCO, 2005). Promoting inclusion involves changing and modifying educational content, approaches, structures, and strategies; advancing a common vision that incorporates all children of the appropriate age range; and holding fast to the conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children (UNESCO, 2005).

Inclusion emerged from the field of special education where children with disabilities and or special needs receive education services separate from general education or as a supplement to general education. The World Report on Disability (World Health Organization (WHO), 2011) defined children with special needs as those who, because of disadvantages—resulting from gender, ethnicity, poverty, war, trauma, status as an orphan, learning difficulties, or a physical disability—experience difficulty with learning or accessing education when compared with other children of the same age. In high-income countries, this category can include children identified as “gifted and talented” (WHO, 2011).

Several researchers promote the inclusion of children with disabilities and special needs in regular education settings as ideal for education (Guralnick, 2001; Shonkoff & Meisels, 2000), and argue for this inclusion to begin at the pre-primary or early childhood level. These promotions center on ethical, moral, legal, and societal implications. Authors assert that, ethically and morally, young children with special needs should have

the same access to education as their peers without special needs, and that it is unfair to segregate children based on intellectual or physical ability (Allen & Cowdery, 2005; Odom & Diamond 1998).

Legally, several international agreements and proclamations such as The Declaration on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1990); Education for All (EFA) (UNESCO, 1990; UNESCO 2000); the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994); and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2006) have committed countries to provide inclusive education to all children with disabilities. In addition, inclusion at the early childhood level has a positive impact on society through human capital development (Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development, 2010; Engle, Black, Behrman, et al., 2007; Grantham-McGregor, Cheung, Cueto, et al., 2007), poverty abatement (Save the Children, 2002; WHO, 2011), acceptance of differences, and the elimination of discrimination (Allen & Cowdery, 2005). The practice of inclusion has proven to be more cost effective than segregated schools for young children with disabilities (Hertzman, 2010; Kamerman et al., 2003). Despite the strong support for inclusion, “the provision of education for children with disabilities across developing countries has often been regarded as a privilege” (Alur, 2001, p. 228).

Available data indicate that 85% of all children with disabilities live in developing countries, defined as nations with a low-to-middle gross national income (United Nations (UN), 2005; WHO, 2011, 2012). In these low to middle income nations the incidence of early childhood disabilities and developmental delays is disproportionately high as compared to developed nations (Coordinators’ Notebook, 2007). In addition to the disproportionately high incidence of early childhood disabilities, in many developing

countries, young children with disabilities are not receiving education services or interventions, instead they “are simply withdrawn from community life; even if they are not actively shunned or maltreated, they are often left without adequate care” (United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), 2005, p. 28).

Informed by the research documenting the benefits of early childhood care and education, international policy initiatives such as The Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1990); Education for All (EFA) (UNESCO, 1990; 2000); the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994); and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2006) stipulate the establishment of inclusive early childhood care and education policies and programs. These international policy statements and declarations have catalyzed efforts in many countries to create and implement legislation and policies to govern inclusive education for children with disabilities.

As UNESCO monitors progress to the EFA goal of education for all by the year 2015, annual EFA Global Monitoring Reports (UNESCO 2002, 2003/4, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011) indicate that education change at the early childhood care and education level is occurring in many countries including developing nations. The education changes implemented however, do not go far enough towards realization of the intended goals of international policy makers to improve access and promote quality inclusive early childhood care and education services (Brock & Swiniarski, 2008; Eleweke & Rodda, 2002).

International organizations with education focus (WHO, 2011; USAID, 2004; Education International, 2010) have suggested that existing efforts have not been successful because developing countries lack the economic, social, and technical capacity

to successfully accomplish the goals established in the EFA and Salamanca documents, which would ensure the implementation of the policy. The assessments done by these organizations however, do not look at the implementation process.

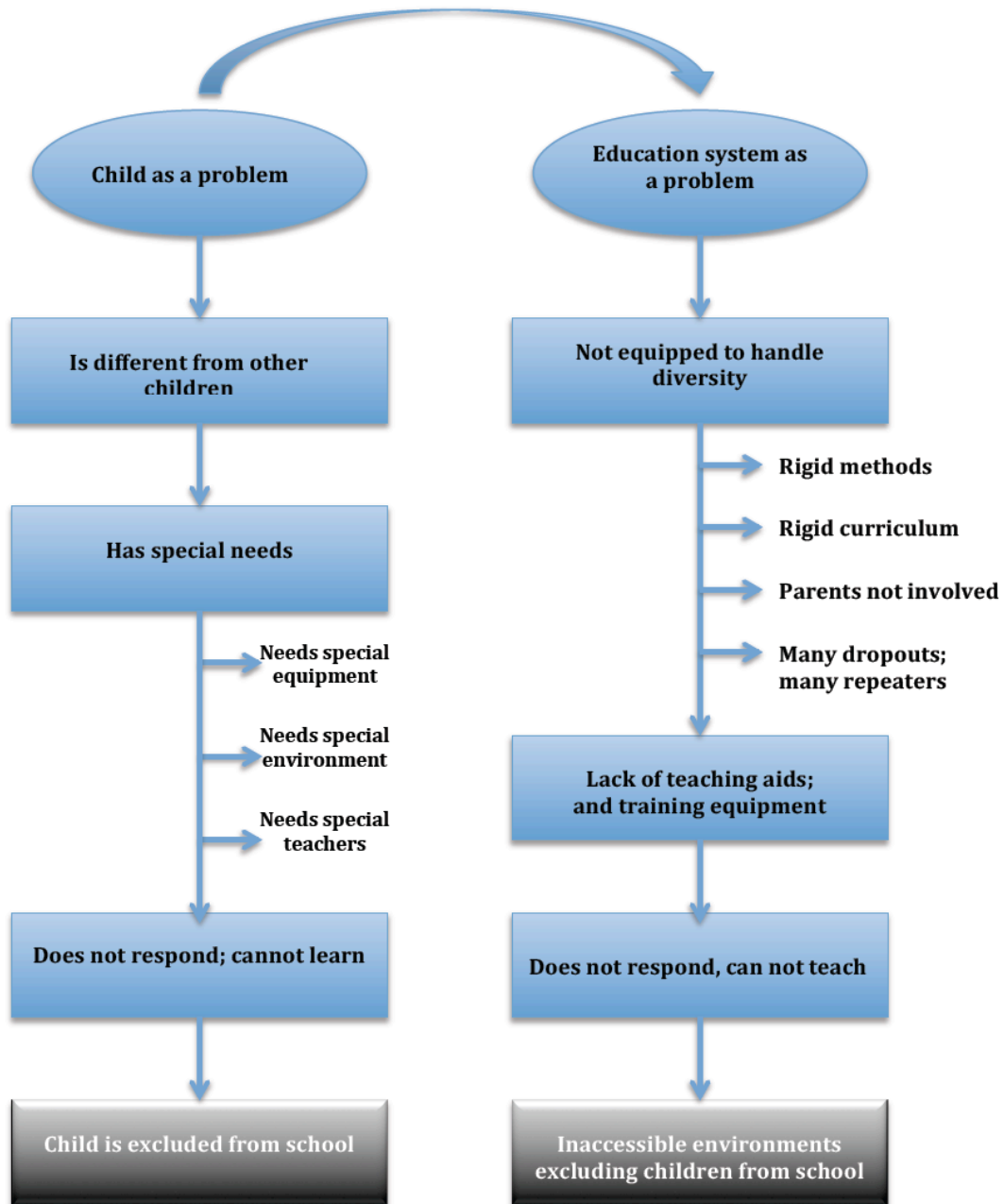
The ongoing adoption of public policies for inclusive early childhood education draws attention to the need for new investigations into how countries are implementing these policies. Policy generation does not guarantee that the policy is actually implemented as intended (Johnstone, 2005). There is a need for changes in professional behavior, organizational structures and cultures both formal and informal, and changes in relationships between consumers, stakeholders and system partners (Fixsen, Naoom, Blasé, Friedman, & Wallace; 2005).

UNESCO in preparation for the International Conference on Education (ICE) on Inclusive Education: the Way of the Future organized 13 regional preparatory workshops with participants from approximately 130 countries. These workshops focused on open discussions of existing perceptions of inclusive education and identification of best practices for use in implementation. At the ICE Conference in 2008, the major concerns and concrete areas for action identified at the regional meetings were presented (see appendix A). The second item on the list is *Ensuring Inclusion Through Early Childhood Care And Education*. These meetings again reaffirmed the value of the early years for learning and development identifying ECCE as an important instrument to build inclusive societies (UNSECO, 2009). As a result of the ICE conference UNESCO developed the Policy Guidelines On Inclusive Education (UNESCO, 2009), which compliments the Guidelines for Inclusion: Ensuring Access for All (UNESCO, 2005). In the next section I describe the UNESCO view of inclusive education systems.

## **Inclusive Education Systems**

UNESCO's work on Education for All and promotion of inclusion questions the relevance and appropriateness of the current ways in which schools organize teaching and learning (UNESCO, 2005). The prevailing education trend sees the child with a disability as a problem and the education system as a means to address the problem. Looking at education through the inclusive lens requires a paradigm shift that acknowledges the environment as having a very strong impact on learning. This shift in focus deemphasizes that learning challenges come from within the learner and focuses more on the school system as the source of the difficulty (see figure 1: Education Through The Inclusion Len: A Shift In Focus Of The Problem).

Figure 1: Education through the inclusion lens: Shift in focus of the problem



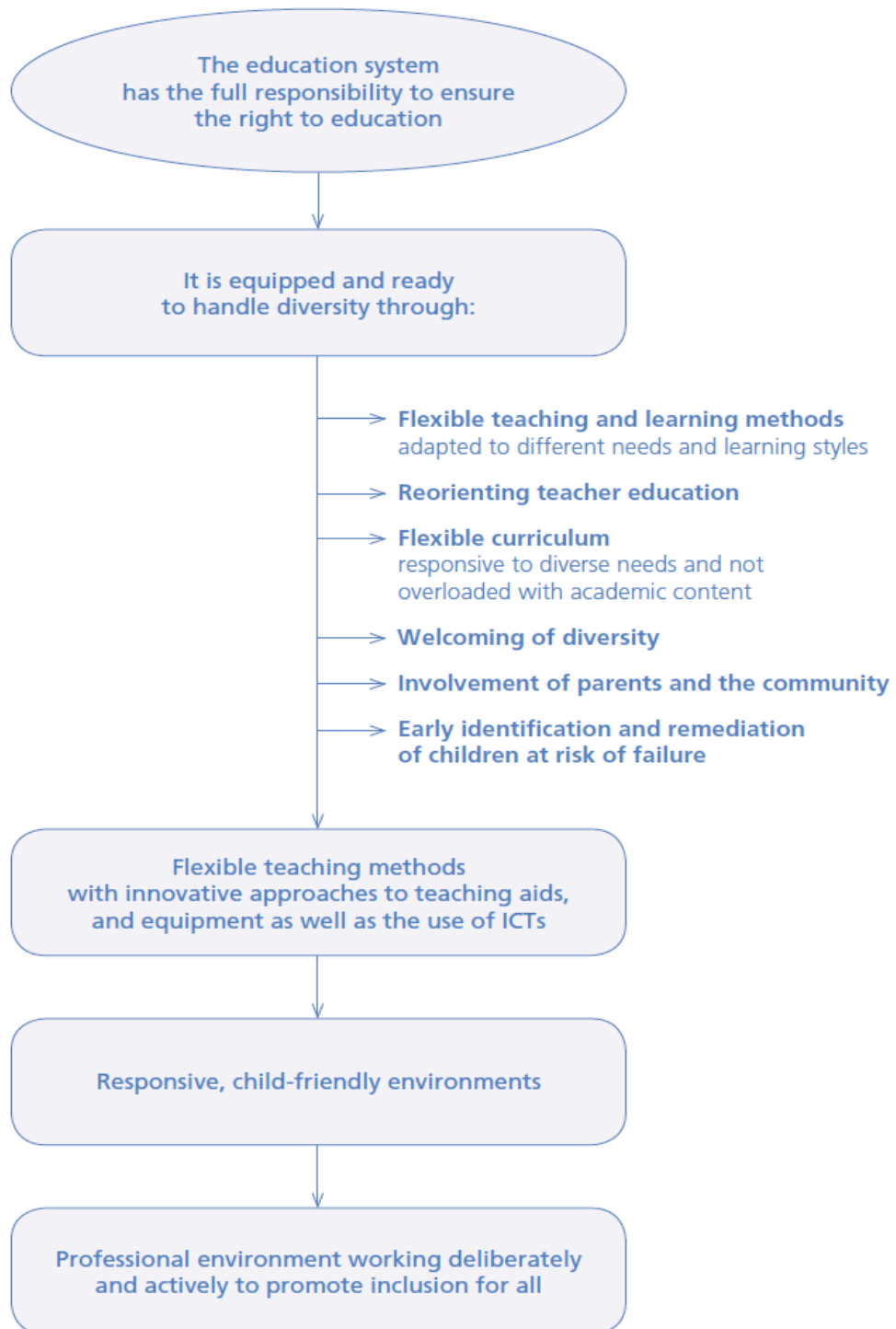
The UNESCO Guidelines for Inclusion (2005) describe what inclusion entails as follows:

- a) Pupils are entitled to take part in all subjects and activities
- b) Teaching and learning are planned with all pupils in mind
- c) The curriculum develops understanding and respect for differences
- d) During lessons all pupils participate
- e) A variety of teaching styles and strategies is used
- f) Pupils experience success in their learning
- g) The curriculum seeks to develop understanding of the different cultures in society
- h) Pupils take part in the assessment and accreditation systems
- i) Difficulties in learning are seen as opportunities for the development of practice (p. 30).

Education through the inclusion lens sees the education system as fully responsible for the education for all children including those with disabilities and special needs. This inclusive education system is equipped to handle diversity through flexible teaching pedagogy, innovative and technologically adaptive teaching aids, and information communication technology (ICT). Environments in inclusive schools should be responsive and child friendly, with professionals working actively to promote inclusion for all. This view is presented in Figure 2 from UNSECO (2009). These are the elements to be present in ECCE classrooms practicing inclusive education.



Figure 2: Education through the inclusion lens



Policy Guidelines on Inclusion UNESCO (2009)

## **Public Policy and Implementation of Inclusive Early Childhood Education**

Public policy is defined by Johnson, Gallagher, and LaMontagne (1994) as “the rules and standards by which scarce public resources are allocated to meet social needs.”

In accord with the public policy definition,

Inclusion public policy refers to the rules and standards that govern the allocation of resources to promote the goals, values, and social hypothesis that including children with disabilities in educational and other programs and services with their peers without disabilities enhances their welfare (Smith & Rapport, 2001).

Research on the implementation process has generally focused on a specific innovation or a particular aspect of implementation (Fixsen & Blasé, 2008) such as teachers’ perceptions of the implementation or the effects of the innovation being implemented. Fixsen et al. (2005) conducted an in-depth synthesis of the interdisciplinary literature on implementation research from agriculture, business, child welfare, education, engineering, juvenile justice, and social services, and identified the following key components essential to implementation: staff selection, staff training, ongoing consultation and coaching, performance assessment (staff and program evaluation), facilitative administrative support, systems interventions data driven decision support, adaptive leadership and technical leadership. These components have been grouped into three separate drivers: competency, organization, and training. Decisions related to policy implementation as noted by Fixsen et al. stream from decision makers in head offices, filter down through supervisors in various bureaucratic divisions, then to practitioners who actually implement new procedures and finally to the customer/consumer/beneficiary of the new policy. According to the authors, using these

drivers and their components to examine the implementation process helps to clarify where strengths and weakness exist in affecting behavior change at the level of the practitioner.

Implementation of policies, such as inclusive education can be influenced by a number of factors. For example, governments may interpret international conventions and agreements differently. Such interpretations often depend on the country's social, political, economic, and cultural context. Countries also have their own history that shapes the way the general population understands and responds to a specific policy initiative such as inclusion of persons with disabilities. Research (Eleweke & Rodda, 2002; Stough, 2003; UNICEF, 2000) conducted in developing countries that has focused primarily on barriers for including children with disabilities has found that, in addition to the economic, social, and technical barriers, deeply entrenched negative perceptions of persons with disabilities can act as a barrier to realizing the goals of inclusive early childhood education policies (Kalyanpur & Gowramma, 2007). Alur (2001) found that individuals in India believed that children with disabilities could be a bad omen on the family. This belief often led parents to hide their children from members of their communities.

A goal of inclusive education is to improve access for children with disabilities and special needs to early education and intervention. The policies related to inclusive education require a variety of changes on the part of organizations and individuals such as welcoming the diverse abilities of learners, using flexible teaching and learning methods, adapting and modifying resources to allow children to access, ensuring that the curriculum is flexible, and responding to students and involving parents and community

in meaningful ways. Even though the international community continues to encourage countries to move towards inclusive education, there is evidence that increased access to inclusive education for young children is not occurring. Thus, there is a need to understand what is preventing the implementation of these policies. In the next section, I describe the current inclusive early education initiatives in one specific developing region.

### **Inclusive Early Childhood Care and Education Initiatives in the Commonwealth Caribbean**

The term “Commonwealth Caribbean” refers to the English-speaking islands in the Caribbean, namely Antigua, Anguilla, Bahamas, Barbados, Barbuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands, and the mainland nations of Belize and Guyana. These nations were once all part of the British Empire, and have maintained and/or adapted many aspects of the British educational system, despite efforts to respond to the specific needs of the Caribbean culture and people (Jules & Panneflek, 2000).

Almost all of the countries in the Caribbean are characterized as developing nations (World Bank, 2012) that have middle-income, emerging economies, based on various socio-economic indicators (UN, 2004; Williams, 2007). The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, however, exhibits a better socioeconomic standing than the other islands. In the 2009 World Bank rankings of countries based on Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Trinidad and Tobago ranked 96th globally, with a GDP of \$21 billion the highest rank in the Caribbean.

Leaders of many Caribbean nations pledged their support for EFA, the Salamanca Declaration, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. These leaders have agreed either to improve upon existing inclusion policies or implement new inclusive education initiatives for children with disabilities. However, according to the EFA Regional Report for Latin American and the Caribbean (UNESCO, 2011), implementing the EFA agenda (which includes inclusive early childhood education) is linked intrinsically to vulnerabilities associated with being small island states. These vulnerabilities include natural disasters, such as hurricanes, volcanic eruptions, and earthquakes. These smaller nations also deal with a number of social and economic challenges like political coups, HIV epidemics, population density, and crime (The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2002).

**Inclusive early education in Trinidad and Tobago.** The People's National Movement (PNM) while in leadership of government administration in Trinidad and Tobago had embarked on the task of achieving developed country status by the year 2020. In this context, the topic of inclusion and education access for all has become very prominent. At the International Conference on Education (ICE) in September 2008, the government of Trinidad and Tobago identified the following key areas of action taken towards establishing an inclusive education system:

- Dissemination of the policy for inclusive education,
- Development of six early childhood care and education centers,
- Establishment of professional development for teachers,
- Allocation of financing on a declining basis for staff required for the implementation of inclusive education,

- Development of a strategy to institutionalize screening of all students at an early age,
- Promotion of the public's awareness of inclusion and diversity at schools,
- Upgrade of school plants, and
- Design and implementation of a coordinated system of monitoring and evaluation (ICE, 2007).

After the 2010 government elections, the political leadership changed to the People's Partnership, a coalition party. The new government has continued with the implementation of inclusive education. These initiatives are all recent and, at the time of this inquiry, no research existed that explores the implementation process for inclusion policies or the initial reactions to the initiatives at the early childhood level. The vacuum of information provides an opportunity to investigate and report on the process of implementing inclusive education in Trinidad and Tobago at the early childhood education care and education level.

### **Purpose of the Study**

In the study I investigate the implementation of an inclusive education policy at the early childhood care and education level a Caribbean country. The purpose is to identify how the process of implementing inclusive education is leading to change in practitioner behavior that will ensure the children with disabilities and special needs are being included in early childhood care and education settings.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guide the study:

1. To what degree is this country's implementation of inclusive education at the early childhood level consistent with effective implementation practices of Fixsen et al. (2008)?
2. Are teachers at pilot centers implementing inclusive education in way that reflects inclusive education principles as identified by UNESCO?

### **Significance of the Study**

For young children with disabilities and special needs inclusive education has a positive impact on development in all areas and can assist in preventing or decreasing the need for specialized services and supports later in life. The reduced need for services later in life lowers the social and education cost for governments and increases human capital potential. Thus, an important goal of early education policy is to ensure that children with special needs and disabilities are provided access to early childhood care education. This is a particular challenge in developing and less developed countries where research from UNSECO's monitoring of early childhood involvement indicates that children with special needs and disabilities are far more vulnerable than their typically developing peers for never accessing early childhood care and education.

Several international documents and proclamations have called for the creation of inclusive early education and yet, while we know countries are making attempts at improving access to early childhood services, we know little about how inclusive education is being interpreted and implemented in developing and less developed countries. This study adds to research in international education development that focuses on inclusive education for children with disabilities in developing countries. Studying the implementation of inclusive early education policy in Trinidad and Tobago

offers an opportunity to understand inclusive early childhood education in one developing country in the Commonwealth Caribbean region. The study also illuminates the factors impacting the implementation of inclusive early education policy in Trinidad and Tobago.

### **Definition of Terms**

***Developing country:*** countries with low to middle gross national income (World Bank, nd)

***Disability:*** a physical or mental deficit or range of deficits that limits the way a person is able to accomplish activities and take in, store and use information

***Education change:*** a deliberate and systematic process of change in the education environment

***Implementation:*** The process of putting into practice an idea, program, or activity new to the people in the environment

***Inclusion:*** planned participation of children both with and without disabilities in the same setting

***Inclusive education:*** UNESCO (2009) provided the following definition:

‘Inclusive education is a process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners...As an overall principle, it should guide all education policies and practices, starting from the fact that education is a basic human right and the foundation for a more just and equal society. (p. 8)

***Special education needs:*** all children and youth whose education needs arise from disabilities or learning difficulty.



***Special education:*** services and supports provided to children identified as having a disability.

## **Chapter 2: Review of the Literature**

In this chapter, I review literature relevant to implementation of inclusive early childhood care and education policies in one country. While the focus of the study is on international inclusive education policy implementation and research, I have included selected research on early childhood inclusion efforts in the United States. The review is divided into five sections, beginning in section one with an examination of literature that addresses the theoretical framework guiding this study. In this section, I provide information on education change theory and the conceptual framework for implementation that has emerged from literature on implementation.

In section two, I review trends in international policies that have been catalyzing nations to implement inclusive education initiatives. This section leads into a critique of the literature on inclusive early childhood education policies in section three. The review continues in section four with an examination of the national context of inclusive education in Trinidad and Tobago, which is the focus of the research. The chapter then concludes with a discussion of the need for further research into how policy implementation takes place.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The research presented in this chapter is focused on the implementation of a specific inclusive education policy in one country. The conceptual framework of Fixsen and Blasé (2008) and an understanding of policy implementation inform the inquiry. I draw from this conceptual framework to contextualize the findings in the literature,

inform the methodology and design of the research, as well as the data gathered for the study.

## **Implementation**

The study of implementation, (Fixsen, Naoom, Blasem Friedman, & Wallace, 2005; Fullan, 2007; Werner, 2004), is grounded in the theory of change. According to Fixsen et al. (2005) and Werner (2004), implementation research focuses on the activities that occur during the design, implementation, administration, operation of a program, and explores the program's services and outcomes. In defining implementation, I offer the following description from Pressman and Wildavsky (1973):

Implementation does not refer to creating initial conditions. Legislation has to be passed and funds committed before implementation takes place to secure the predicted outcome. Similarly, agreements with local enterprises would have to be reached before attempts are made to carry them out....Lack of implementation should not refer to failure to get going but to inability to follow through....Implementation may be viewed as a process of interaction between the setting of goals and actions to achieving them. (p. xv)

Fullan (2007) extended this definition and further explained that implementation included the process of putting into practice an idea, program, or set of activities and structures new to the people attempting or expecting to change. The key here is that people's behaviors are expected to change.

Education research is full of examples of innovations and new policies designed to improve outcomes for students. However, time and time again, both researchers and practitioners experience a "science to service gap" (Wallace, Blasé, Fixsen & Naoom,

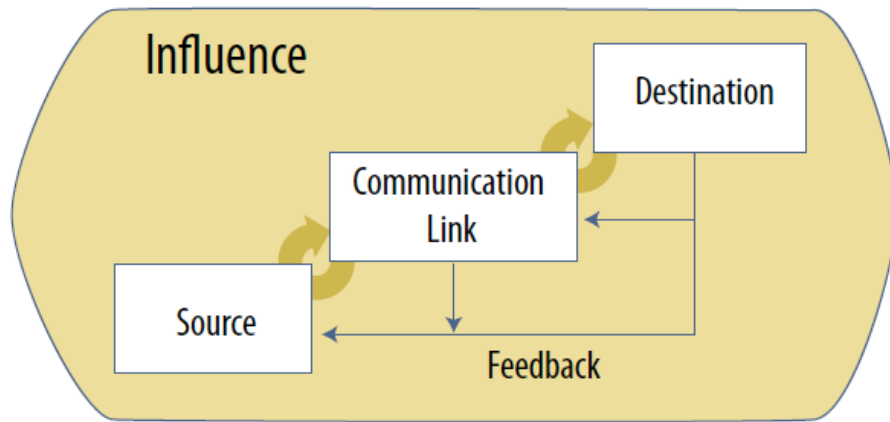
2008) where educational leaders have difficulty implementing an innovation or new policy with fidelity and in the manner intended to improve outcomes for students and their families. Because of this problem, many researchers have explored how educators have implemented various policies and innovations. These research efforts generally focused on a specific innovation or a particular aspect of implementation (Fixsen & Blasé, 2008).

### **Fixsen et al. Model**

Fixsen et al. (2005) conducted a detailed review of literature on implementation from across disciplines, including agriculture, business, child welfare, education, engineering, juvenile justice, social services, and developed a conceptual framework for programs and practices seen in figure 3. In this conceptual framework *source* is the intended policy or program as developed by researchers or selected for implementation by senior decision makers, the *destination* is the practitioner who actually installs and uses the new practice or program. The *communication link* represents the core implementation components (to be discussed in detail later) provided by the organization to ensure that the practitioner is fully capable of delivering the policy or program. Fixsen et al. refer to persons in the communication link as “*purveyors*” who are responsible for implementing the components and ensuring sustainability of the new policy or program. The purveyors are middle management directors and supervisors. The feedback loops represent a regular and reliable flow of information about performance, successes, and challenges between practitioners, managers and decision makers. All the activity takes place in a sphere of *influence*, which includes the social, economic, political,

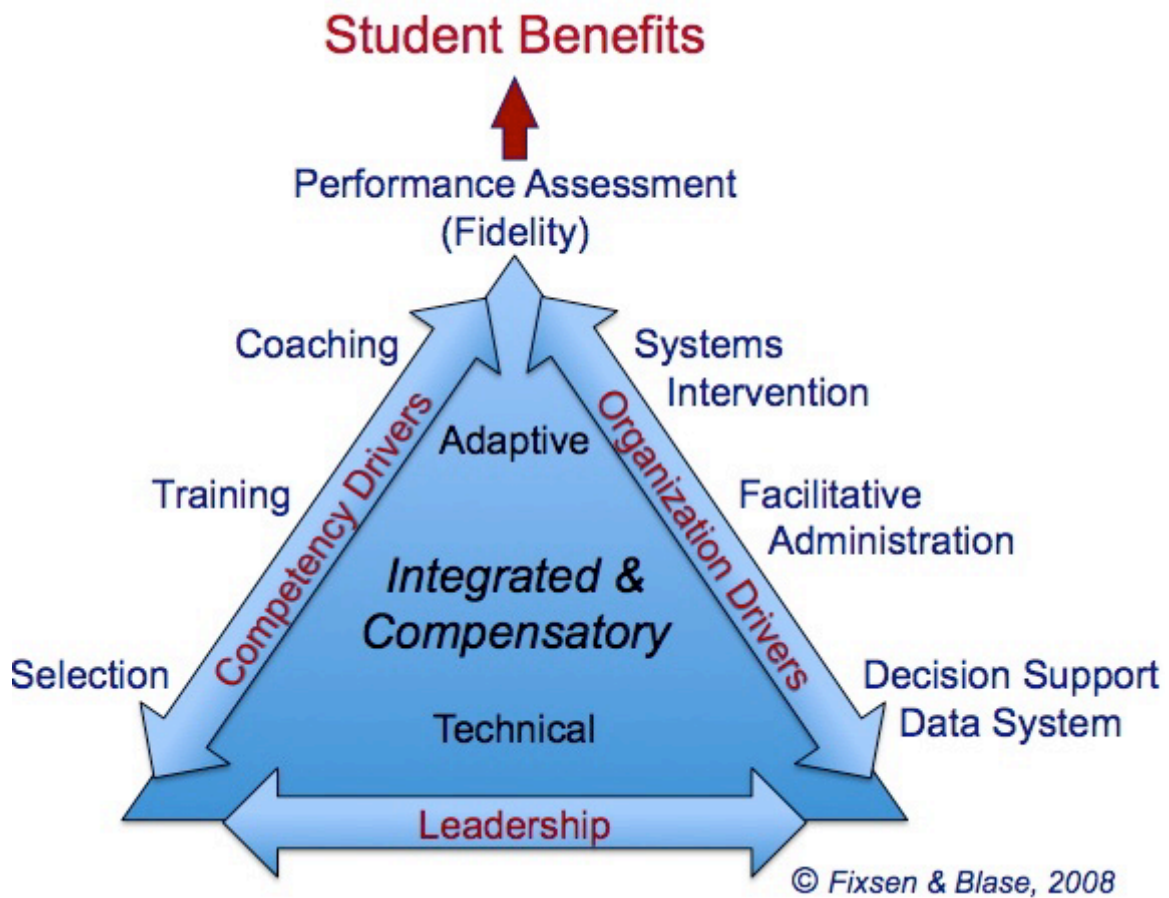
psychological, [and cultural] factors directly or indirectly influencing those involved in the implementation of the policy.

Figure 3: A Conceptual Framework for Implementation of Defined Practice and Programs



According to Fixsen et al., within each stage of the implementation process decision makers and purveyors of new innovations or policies develop and sustain high-fidelity practitioner behavior using integrated and compensatory core components of implementation: staff selection, training, ongoing consultation and coaching, staff and program evaluation, facilitative administration, decision support data system, systems intervention and leadership. Blaze and Fixsen (2009) grouped the core components into *Competency Drivers*: Staff selection, training, ongoing consultation and coaching, staff and program evaluation are the features needed to develop competency in use of the new practice. *Organization Drivers*: The organization itself needs to ensure facilitative administration, decision support data system, and system interventions are in place to ensure that the larger system has the capacity to support and sustain the new practices. *Leadership Drivers*: At all levels of the organization leadership that is responsive to the adaptive and technical needs of the practitioners and consumers is essential to ensure that day to day operations are effective. Figure 4, shows the implementation drivers and core components. By using the implementation drivers and their core components in integrated and compensatory way decision makers, supervisors and directors can impact practitioner behavior resulting in positive outcomes of policy implementation. These drivers are the building blocks needed to support practical, organizational, and systemic change such as implementing inclusive education that directly impacts young children with special needs (Metz & Bartley, 2012). Halle, Metz and Martinez-Beck, (2013), used the Fixsen model to evaluate the implementation of various initiatives in early childhood settings and found the system effective.

Figure 4: Implementation Drivers and Components





## **Summary of Implementation of Education Policy**

I have selected work of Fixsen et al. (2005) to inform this study since it focuses on what I believe creates the science to service gap and the need to change individuals' behavior. Fullan's (2007) definition of implementation is worth highlighting since it focused on the fact that while new ideas, programs, or activities and structures are put into place, the practitioners or people executing these new innovations are the ones expected to change. The Fixsen et al. model is embedded in change theory and captures those key implementation components found in successfully implemented programs. The model focuses on developing and sustaining practitioner behaviors using the integrated and compensatory core implementation drivers when implementing new policies and practices.

Several international conventions and declarations have been made calling on nations to create and implement policies that address inclusion of young children with special needs. In the next section, I review some of the international policy initiatives that have driven nations to formulate and implement new policies for inclusive early childhood education.

## **International Policies and Inclusive Education**

A review of the international agenda on inclusive education policy reveals a historical trend in policy development beginning with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 and proceeding to the present day with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (see Appendix B for an overview of international policies and their commonalities). While numerous international declarations and statements have advocated for every child's right to an education, the Sundberg

Declaration (UNESCO, 1981), the World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons (UN, 1982), the Tallinn Guidelines for Action on Human Resources (UN, 1989b), the Jomtien World Education for All (Haddad & Inter-Agency Commission for the World Conference on Education for All, 1990), the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), the Dakar World Education for All (UNESCO, 2000) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNESCO, 2008) all focused most heavily on early childhood education and are discussed in this section of the chapter.

**The Universal Declaration of Human Rights.** The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations [UN], 1948) marked the first time that international organizations recognized and set forth in detail the rights and freedoms of individuals. The declaration did not explicitly address inclusive early childhood education for children with disabilities; however, article 25 of the declaration addressed entitlement to special care and assistance during the childhood years. Additionally, article 26 (1) stated that “everyone has the right to an education.” The Universal Declaration of Human Rights “forms the fundamental normative basis on which international norms and standards concerning persons with disabilities have evolved” (UN, 1998, p. 1). The Declaration on Human Rights informed the Convention Against Discrimination in Education (UNESCO, 1960), the Declaration on the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons (UN, 1971), and the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons (UN, 1975). While these policies did not specifically speak to the young child, they generally reference the right to education for all. The Sundberg Declaration (UNESCO, 1981) was more specific in its reference to the rights of young children to be included in regular education settings.

**The Sundberg Declaration.** The Sundberg Declaration (UNESCO, 1981) was issued at The World Conference on Actions and Strategies for Education, Prevention, and Integration during the International Year of Disabled Persons. The declaration addressed the notion of inclusive early childhood education by declaring that integration should begin as early in life as possible, with appropriate education and training, regardless of a student's personal situation (Article 6). In addition, the Sundberg Declaration addressed the need for early intervention and parent involvement and emphasized the role of prevention in the avoidance of handicapping situations (Articles 6, 7 and 8).

**World Programme of Action and Tallinn Guidelines.** Following the International Year of Disabled Persons, the United Nations (UN) declared the period from 1983 to 1992 as the Decade of the Disabled Person. During this period, the UN issued the World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons (UN, 1982), and later annexed the Tallinn Guidelines for Action on Human Resources Development in the Field of Disability (UN, 1989). The World Programme of Action and its annexed Tallinn guidelines reaffirmed earlier UN and UNESCO declarations and sought to encourage governments to take a lead in awakening the consciousness of populations to the potential gains that could result from the inclusion of persons with disabilities in every area of life (UN, 1982). The documents were also the first to highlight and address the high incidence of disability in developing countries. Early identification, intervention, and education emerged as both preventative and rehabilitative measures in the World Programme and Tallinn Guidelines, and the UN urged government leaders to remove obstacles to the full participation in all spheres of life for persons with impairments and

disabilities, and wherever pedagogically possible, to facilitate these students' integration into the ordinary school system.

The Tallinn Guidelines provided member states with specific strategies to enable the realization of the equalization of opportunities during the Decade of Disabled Persons. The guidelines also set the bar for rights to early childhood care and education and inclusion higher than previous conventions and declarations. The Tallinn Guidelines described education for the young child with disabilities as follows:

The early years are critical in the overall development of a disabled child and for the fostering of positive attitudes towards the child. Specific programmes and training materials should be developed to address these needs during the formative infant and pre-school years. (UN, 1989, para. 22)

The Tallinn Guidelines called on government leaders to “adopt, enforce and fund legally binding standards and regulations to improve access for persons with disabilities” (para. 12). The document did not call for the development of policy in isolation, but highlighted the need for assessment, monitoring, and evaluation at the program planning stage to ensure that implemented policies would fulfill their intended objectives. The guidelines encouraged government leaders to develop and implement alternatives to segregated schools at the national and local levels. “These alternatives include special education teachers as consultants to regular education teachers, resource rooms with specialized personnel and materials, special classrooms in regular schools and interpreters for deaf students” (para. 25).

In developing countries, the guidelines recommended Community-Based Rehabilitation programs to train and equip disabled persons and their families for

successful access to all aspects of life. The guidelines also addressed, with intent similar to that of the Sundberg Declaration, multi-agency and multi-disciplinary involvement in the education and training of persons with disabilities, as well as the need for community involvement and awareness in identification and intervention (UNESCO, 1981).

**Convention on the Rights of the Child.** The Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1990) was sponsored by United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The entire Convention focused on ensuring basic human rights for all children. Article 23 of this three-part, 54-article convention specifically addresses "mentally and physically disabled children" and their right to access and receive education in a manner conducive to social integration. This right to access, however, is "subject to [the] availability of resources," the eligibility of the child and those responsible for the child's care, and the appropriateness of said access for the child's condition.

While the suggestions and frameworks for international policy implementation reviewed thus far were very powerful and may have yielded significant benefits, they also offered the opportunity for what Stubbs (1997) termed "indefinite procrastination" (p. 1). The documents all encouraged action if the states had resources. In addition, few studies conducted follow up investigations to determine whether member states actually implemented given suggestions.

**World Declaration on Education for All.** In 1990, UNESCO sponsored the World Conference on Education for All. Delegates from 155 countries, along with representatives from 150 governmental and non-governmental organizations, met in Jomtien, Thailand. The participants, like their predecessors, bore witness to the notion that education was a fundamental human right, and, in accord, they adopted the World

Declaration on Education for All (EFA; UNESCO, 1990b), which urged all countries to intensify their efforts to make *education for all* a reality.

The Declaration stated that equitable access for disabled persons in all categories was “an integral part of the education system” (UNESCO, 1990, Article 3.5). According to Peters (2007), the use of the term “integral part” suggested one inclusive system, as opposed to a program that should be inserted into the regular education system. This understanding is in keeping with the World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons (UN, 1982) and the Tallinn Guidelines (UN, 1989), which supported embedding services into the existing system and cost effective alternatives to segregated schools, respectively. Further, the EFA Declaration extended attention to early childhood care and education and referred to in the Tallinn Guidelines by highlighting the primacy of early intervention with the statement that “learning begins at birth” (UNESCO, 1990, Article 5).

**Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities.** The Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (UN, 1993) were developed by the UN in response to lessons learned during the Decade of Disabled Person and experience gained during the implementation of the World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons (UN, 1982) and the Tallinn Guidelines for Action on Human Resources Development in the Field of Disability . The Standard Rules were not compulsory, however, the authors intended for these rules to become customary, like the rules of international law. As such, I decided to include this initiative in the present analysis.

Rule 6 of this document focused on education. The rule outlined nine provisions and called on states to integrate the education of children with disabilities into the existing education system. The language used in the Rules referred to “integrated settings” and viewed the education of persons with disabilities as “an integral part of the national educational planning, curriculum development and school organization” (UN, 1989, Rule 6.1). The Standard Rules on Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities is also important in that it mirrored the Sundberg Declaration (UNESCO, 1981) and the Tallinn Guidelines (UN, 1989) in its explicit identification of the need to provide special attention to those children who are very young and those of preschool age. Another constant in the Standard Rules is the insistence on the need for clearly stated policy accepted locally at the school level and by the community.

**The Salamanca Statement and Framework.** A review of policy related to inclusive efforts at the international level would be incomplete without a discussion of the Salamanca Statement and Framework of Action on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994). This seminal document focused solely on the education of children and youth with disabilities. The premise of the document was “that human differences are normal and that learning must accordingly be adapted to the needs of the child rather than the child fitted to preordained assumptions regarding the pace and nature of the learning process” (UNESCO, 1994, p. 7). The Salamanca Statement addressed the needs of children with disabilities, children who are gifted and talented, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic, or cultural minorities, and children from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups. The Statement adopted the term “special educational needs” (p. 6), in reference

to all children and youth whose needs arise from a disability or learning difficulty. The foundational principle of inclusion in the Salamanca statement was that all children should learn together.

**The World Education Forum and Dakar Framework for Action (EFA 2000).**

In 2000, UNESCO hosted the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, a follow up to the Jomtien World Declaration on Education for All (UNESCO, 1990). This Forum culminated in a series of six regional conferences at which national leaders reported on their progress towards achieving Education for All. The consensus was that in the 10 years following the 1990 World Declaration on Education for All, participating nations had made negligible progress in addressing basic learning needs around the globe. The review of progress indicated that countries seemed to focus on the “easy to reach” populations, and revealed that in developing countries, 98% of the children with disabilities still were not in school (Magrab, 2004).

At the World Education Forum in Dakar, participants pledged renewed commitment to achieving the EFA goals by adopting the Dakar Framework of Action (UNESCO, 2000). While the Dakar Framework for Action did not address specifically the inclusion of young children with disabilities, the six international goals link to the tenets of inclusive education for young children with special needs. For example, Goal 1 of EFA 2000 acknowledged the importance of education during a child’s early years. The goal emphasized the improvement and expansion of early childhood care and education services.

Goal 2 sought to ensure that by 2015, all children in difficult circumstances, particularly girls, would have access to, and complete, free, and compulsory primary



education of good quality. Goal 3 addressed the need for equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills for all persons. Goal 4 called for a 50% increase in adult literacy by 2015, and placed a special emphasis on literacy among women. Goal 5 addressed the elimination of gender disparities in education by 2005, and the achievement of gender equality in education by 2015.

The EFA 2000 was the first policy document to address the issue of quality education as a separate goal, and listed improvements in education quality as the sixth goal. According to the EFA 2000, “quality is at the heart of education, and what takes place in classrooms and other learning environments is fundamentally important to the future well-being of children, young people and adults” (UNESCO, 2000, p. 17).

**The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).** In 2008, the United Nations (UN) sought to address the issues of disability, equality of access, and the dignity of persons with disabilities through the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNESCO, 2008). Articles 7 and 24 of the CRPD addressed the needs of children with disabilities and education, respectively, and asserted the need for signatories to the convention to ensure that children with disabilities equally enjoyed all the rights, freedoms, and privileges as other children. These articles echoed the sentiments of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNESCO, 1990a), but the precluding language of access being subject to available resources and eligibility of the child was replaced with the concept of Universal Design and inclusiveness at all levels. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities provided the following definition of Universal Design:

The design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. “Universal design” shall not exclude assistive devices for particular groups of persons with disabilities where this is needed. (Article 2, para. 4)

The Salamanca Statement, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as well as the EFA document, are the most current international protocols guiding nations as they implement or revise existing legislation related to education and in particular education of children with disabilities.

**Summary of international policies and inclusive education.** In this section, I reviewed the international policies that have paved the way for the protocols now governing approaches that various countries have taken in their implementation of inclusive education. The EFA 2000 and Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) both took the unprecedented step of stating that proper educational funding for developing nations required international efforts. While the authors of these policies--UNESCO and UNICEF--could not mandate debt relief or any other specific action, they encouraged the collective commitment of regional and international agencies and institutions to support nations in reaching the goals of *education for all*. As part of this collective commitment, there is a comprehensive international strategy.

The crux of the international strategy was to have EFA plans embedded at the national level for participating countries (EFA 2000). These national-level EFA plans needed to specify reforms that addressed the EFA goals, establish a sustainable financial framework, and be time-bound and action-oriented (Magrab, 2004). As such, multilateral

organizations, regional organizations, bilateral donor agencies for International Development and Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs; see table 1 for a full list) make stipulations in their loan agreements that ensure participating countries are working towards actualizing these goals. It is important to note that these lending agencies are all based in developed countries, and some of the requirements stipulated for investor countries may not always be suited to the social, economic, and political climate of the nation. In addition to the international strategy, the agencies also required that participating countries have an additional resource in the form of Flagship Programs. Management for Flagship programs is provided by partnerships of voluntary organizations, which work to assist countries in eliminating obstacles to achieving the EFA 2000 goals.

Table 1: Participating Donor and International Organizations

Category	Organization
Multilateral Organizations	European Commission
	UNFPA
	UNESCO
	UNICEF
	ILO WHO
	World Bank
Regional Organizations	African Development Bank
	Inter-American Development Bank (IADB)
Bilateral Donors (Agencies for International Development)	Canada (CIDA)
	Denmark (DANIDA)
	Finland (FINIDA)
	France
	Italy
	Japan
	Netherlands
	Norway (NORAD)
	Sweden (SIDA)
	United Kingdom (DFID)
	United States (USAID)
NGOs	Action Aid Alliance
	CARE
	Save the Children

While actual changes in the developing world are hard to measure, some countries have implemented policies based on recommendations of the EFA, Salamanca, and CRPD documents (Johnstone, 2005). The EFA report (2005) stated that while national leaders have made progress towards the goals, children with disabilities in many countries, particularly young children (EFA early childhood), still do not receive basic educational resources and instruction. In an effort to get the countries of the developing world on track to meet the EFA goal of education for all children, including those with disabilities, UNESCO established the Flagship on Education for All and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Towards Inclusion in 2002.

### **International Efforts to Develop Inclusive Education**

Several nations began substantive reviews of their national education policies, towards the implementation of inclusive education systems, because of the EFA 2000 (UNESCO, 2000) and the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) or in response to the promotion of the documents. For example, the government of Botswana revised its National Policy for Education in 1994. The Revised National Policy for Education in Botswana mandated access to education for all and recognized children with special needs as a disadvantaged group (Dart, 2007). One goal of the revised law was to promote early identification of and intervention for children with special needs. Botswana's Early Childhood Care and Education Policy required early childhood centers to make provisions for children with special needs and liaise with the Department of Special Education for guidance and support (Dart).

In Malaysia, national leaders introduced inclusive education as a part of the country's education policy reform initiatives in mid 1990s. The resulting Education Act

of 1996 included preschool education as part of the national system of education (UNESCO, 2006). The Malaysian Education Act focused on providing instruction to students with special needs in mainstream classes (Ali, 2006).

The Namibian government addressed disability as a human rights and development issue when creating the National Policy on Disability of 1997. The policy sought to create a society for all (Haihambo & Lightfoot, 2010). A plethora of activities in Nigeria aimed at improving access for children with special needs led to the revision of the National Policy on Education in 2008, which was explicit about providing education services for children and youth with special needs in inclusive settings (Ajuwon, 2008).

In 1990, the Chinese government enacted The People's Republic of China on Protection of Disabled Persons Act in response to the EFA conference. This act was the first law in China that focused on the rights of persons with disabilities. This law recognized the need for early intervention (EI) and early childhood special education (ECSE) services, and advocated for early childhood inclusion as the best means to serve young children with special needs (Hu, 2010).

National leaders from Trinidad and Tobago worked to implement inclusive education as a response to the EFA (UNESCO, 2000) and Salamanca Statements (UNESCO, 1994). In 2008, the government of Trinidad and Tobago enacted the Inclusive Education Policy designed to establish an education system that was available, accessible, acceptable, and adaptable to all learners (MoE, 2008).

National policies typically are based on a combination of research findings, national values, and current policies (Fullan, 2005; Kingdon, 2003). While many nations have adopted inclusive education policies, particularly policies that focus on inclusion at

the early childhood education level, debates continue over the effectiveness and shortcomings of inclusive education. In the next section, I review research on inclusive early childhood education.

### **Review and Critique of Research on Inclusive Early Childhood Education**

To gain a better understanding of the issues surrounding inclusive early childhood education internationally, I conducted a review of research and other literature in the field of inclusive early childhood education and policy implementation. The literature search process began with the establishment of a guideline for citation retrieval. The preliminary review utilized the following criteria to select books, reports, and published and unpublished articles: published in English, contained all the search terms or related words, references available, from scholarly peer reviewed journals, and published no earlier than 2000.

The previous limiters were employed to search within EBSCOhost using the following databases: Academic Search Premier, Education Research Complete, ERIC, PsycARTICLES, PsycCRITIQUES, Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection, PsycINFO, SocINDEX, Women's Studies International, Political Science Complete, Child Development & Adolescent Studies, and Humanities International Complete. In addition to these databases, I utilized the Dissertation and Theses and Digital Repository at the University of Maryland (DRUM). I selected the following combination of search terms: early childhood special education, implementation, inclusive early childhood education, and inclusive preschool to sift through the possible research articles.

The search yielded 93 studies, including dissertations, many of which originated in the United States of America. I read each of the abstracts guided by the following

criteria: a) research specific to implementation of inclusive education policy, and b) research focused on children 3 to 5 years in general education settings. From the 93 studies, only eight focused on implementation of inclusive education policy. The small number could be attributed to factors such as the language chosen for the search and the fact that I conducted the search electronically. Other publications related to implementation of inclusive education at the early childhood level also may exist in different languages. Since I speak English, the search necessitated that limitation. Additional unpublished research documents also may be available at institutions that are very pertinent to the topic.

Three research articles were relevant to the implementation of inclusive early childhood care and education programs, and all three studies were based on US samples. Two studies (Lieber et al., 2000; Purcell, Horn, & Palmer, 2007) examined the implementation of inclusive early childhood education initiatives. The third study (Cross, Traub, Hutter-Pishgahi, & Shelton, 2004) examined inclusion as it related to young children with significant disabilities. In addition to these studies, I found five dissertations that addressed the implementation of inclusive education policies. Two of the dissertations (Cox, 2010; Purcell, 2003) focused on the implementation of inclusive education efforts in early childhood settings in the US. The others explored inclusive education implementation in Turkey (Ciyer, 2010), Thailand (Apinwong, 2002), and Lesotho (Johnstone, 2005); however, these studies did not target early childhood. I have separated my critique of the research into two segments. Segment one reviews research focused on the US, and segment two focuses on research from other countries.



## **Research in the United States**

Lieber et al. (2000), as part of a larger study, investigated the initiation and implementation of inclusive preschool programs in 18 early childhood centers from four geographical regions in the US. The researchers classified the programs using two categories: start time of inclusion and location of inclusion. Start time related to time that the preschool program adopted inclusion policies, either early or late. Early adoption included implementation efforts that took place before 1991, when services for preschoolers with disabilities became mandatory in the US. Late adoption characterized implementation efforts that took place after 1991.

Inclusion efforts occurred either at the classroom or at the system level. The programs varied in location (rural, urban, or suburban) and the socioeconomic status of the students they served. Teachers and administrators from the programs, as well as district and state level administrators of the education system in the four geographic regions, shared their perspectives on the initiation and implementation of inclusive education. Lieber et al. (2000) collected data for the larger study using open-ended interviews with a standard protocol. They extracted and analyzed for this study all resulting data on the history of inclusion at the program and district levels, perceptions of barriers and supports, and definitions of inclusion.

Lieber et al. (2000) coded data from their qualitative study using the constant comparative method with further cross-site analyses and member checks. They identified six common influences across all the sites as facilitators or barriers to inclusion. These influences included (a) key personnel; (b) shared vision; (c) national, state and local policies that influence inclusion; (d) training and external supports for professionals

implementing the program; (e) organizational structure; and (f) community influences. Lieber et al. stated that they found few of these influences to be barriers to implementation. Organizational structure, more than any other factor, however, appeared to be a barrier, especially when multiple agencies were involved.

While this study included early childhood sites from four different regions of the US, the sample only examined 18 schools. Therefore, the investigation was not representative of the multiple types of early childhood programs that exist. In addition, the authors noted that preschool inclusive education is not, in itself, an educational innovation. However, when programs choose to implement inclusive education at the early childhood level, the effort then becomes an innovation. While this research is part of a larger study in which observations of implemented practices occurred, the article does not address observations of the implementation of inclusive practices. Another article (Odom et al., 2001) related to the larger study provided details about what inclusion looked like in the early childhood settings.

Purcell et al., (2007) extended the work of Lieber et al. (2000) by investigating the initiation and maintenance of preschool inclusion services and using the key influences from the earlier study as predetermined categories for data analysis. As I reviewed the dissertations used for this literature review, it appeared that the publication from Purcell et al. was based on the dissertation work of Purcell (2003), the publication's lead author. Since the dissertation contained more detail, I have incorporated information from both works in this review. In Purcell (2003) and Purcell et. al. (2007), the researchers investigated five schools located in a Midwestern state. Outside of this difference in location, the study shared a number of similarities with Lieber et al., in that

the schools had similar characteristics--they varied in location, type of program administration, and size. In addition, both studies were qualitative inquiries that used similar approaches to data gathering and analysis. In selecting participants, Purcell utilized key informants who were current or former employees of the State Department of Education and were actively involved in the initiation and implementation of inclusive education efforts. These key informants selected other participants for the study.

Data coding in this study incorporated Lieber et al.'s (2000) key influences; however, Purcell (2003) and Purcell et al. (2007) added two new categories: (a) collaborative relationships and family support and (b) partnership emerged during data coding and analysis. Key factors supporting the initiation of preschool inclusion included key personnel and shared vision. These key personnel according to the study were often administrative staff at the district level. The factor of shared vision related to the common understanding amongst participants that inclusive early childhood placements were the most appropriate model for education of all children. Organizational structure was the key factor supporting continuation of inclusion.

While shared vision emerged as a reported support factor for inclusion at all sites, according to both sources, shared vision also emerged as a challenge to initiating inclusive preschools. At each site, participants reported the lack of a common goal or vision for inclusion-inhibited initiation. This lack of vision related to participants' concerns about their own effectiveness and ability to teach in inclusive settings and parents' of children with disabilities concerns that their children would not receive the quality services they needed. Key factors challenging continuation included collaborative relationships and policy. The challenge of collaborative relationships

pertained to changes in personnel at various levels during different stages of the program. In her dissertation, Purcell (2003) related that while family support and partnership emerged as a facilitator of inclusive preschool education, it did not weigh as a key influence to initiation or continuation.

The limitations in Purcell's (2003) study related to sample size and the key informants. Purcell admitted to the presence of bias in the selection of interview participants, because key informants who were employees of the Local Education Agency (LEA) recommended interview participants. While the researchers requested a variety of participants, the key informants from the LEA selected participants and provided a schedule for the interview of participants. Purcell indicated that even though she requested parent participants, the key informants did not make any recommendations. Like Lieber et al. (2000), this study did not report on observations of children with disabilities participating alongside their typically developing peers in preschool settings..

Like the studies already reviewed, Cox (2010) conducted a qualitative study to investigate the actions taken by public school districts to develop, implement, and maintain inclusive preschool programs. In this study, Cox interviewed individual administrators with oversight responsibilities for four sites serving children with disabilities in an inclusion program. The small number of programs in the study is a limitation to making generalizations about how inclusive programs are developed, implemented, and maintained.

Cox (2010) identified leadership, philosophy, and input as the key factors influencing purpose and motivation for the development of inclusive preschool programs. This finding is similar to the findings of Lieber et al., (2000), Purcell (2003), and Purcell

et al (2007) who identified key personnel and shared vision as key factors in the initiation of inclusive programs. In Cox's study, the organizational structures used to implement inclusive preschool programs were program development and staff development. Study participants noted the need for information and training for all stakeholders before, during, and after implementation of the programs, as well as ongoing staff development as critical to sustaining the inclusive programs (Cox, 2010). This finding also mirrored those of the previous studies. Like those other studies, Cox also reported the role of organizational structures in the continuation of inclusive programs.

The barriers to implementation, as identified by the administrator participants of Cox's study, were the need for financial contributions to support the program which translated to the key influence of training and external support (Lieber et al., 2000). Administrators also cited the need for communication with and between staff during staff changes. This type of need equates to collaborative relationships (Purcell, 2003). In addition to financial resources, participants identified that support from district staff and agencies, was a key component of the program.

The fifth study, by Cross, Trab, Hutter-Pishgahi and Shelton (2004), is also a qualitative inquiry. This investigation examined the practices implemented by groups of individuals supporting the inclusion of children with significant disabilities in an early childhood classroom. The participants in this study included seven children with severe disabilities--six boys and one girl--ranging in age from 1 year 3 months to 5 years 2 months. The children all were enrolled in an inclusive early childhood setting in which the majority of their peers were typically developing. Other participants in the study included the individuals who provided services, supports, and education to the children

and their families. The researchers referred to each child's participating group as a cluster. There were a total of 48 participants in seven clusters. This study was the only one in this review that focused on the outcome of inclusive education practices in the classroom.

The children in Cross et al.'s (2004) study attended three different types of pre-school programs: church-sponsored, public school, and privately-owned. The researchers collected data using interviews, observations of practitioners engaged in typical education routines, and written documents. Cross et al. identified four elements that affected the practice of inclusive education implementation in preschools. The elements that emerged from data analysis included the following: attitudes, parent-provider relationships, therapeutic interventions, and adaptations.

In Cross et al.'s (2004) study, the participants had optimistic and clearly identifiable attitudes towards inclusion. This optimism can be seen as a shared vision (Lieber et al., 2000) of providing education for all children in an inclusive setting. Across the cluster of participants, respondents expressed differences in their attitudes. Teachers and therapists who initially seemed hesitant, because of their perceived inability to serve children with special needs, gained confidence and increased self efficacy as time progressed and they began to see how their influence positively impacted the child's growth and development. Administrators recognized the need to take leadership and set the tone for implementing inclusive practices. Parents shared positive attitudes as well, and commented on the developmental gains made by their child as a result of the inclusive setting (Cross, Traub, Hutter-Pishgahi, & Shelton, 2004).

Cross et al. (2004) found that the relationships between parents and providers in this study proved a key element to the successful implementation of inclusive practices. This finding aligned with Purcell's (2003; 2007) key influence of family support and partnership. The researchers noted, however, that the parent-provider relationships in this study were essential in facilitating inclusive practices and in the initiation and continuation of inclusion. Cross et al. also noted the importance of ongoing interpersonal communication, since the delivery of therapeutic interventions in the classroom occurred through a variety of modes. The range of delivery methods was facilitated through constant communication amongst therapists, between therapists and teachers, and with parents. These collaborative relationships (Purcell, 2003) supported the implementation of inclusive services.

Cross et al. (2004) found that to realize the inclusion of a child with severe disabilities, the programs implemented special adaptations. The functional adaptations, as well as those which supported play, learning, and socialization, served to promote the child's independence, health, and safety. Participants in the study saw these adaptations as critical to the successful inclusion of children. Based on the information provided in the dissertation, I inferred that these programs had been involved in implementing inclusive education for some time. The variations in the adaptations used to ensure full participation suggested that these programs were at the innovation stage of implementation (Fixsen et al., 2005).

The studies reviewed thus far are all based on US samples, and each employed qualitative case studies as their methodology of choice. The studies by Lieber et al. (2000); Purcell (2003), and Purcell et al. (2007) were situated in the initial

implementation stage (Fixsen et al., 2005). These studies highlighted how stakeholders responded to the innovation of implementing inclusive early childhood education initiatives. The studies identified key influences during the initial implementation phase. The key influences in these studies indicated some of the requirements for sustainability of the innovation.

### **International Research**

The three international studies in this review took place in Turkey, Thailand, and Lesotho. According to World Bank (2012) classifications, Turkey and Thailand have middle-income economies, and Lesotho has a lower-middle income economy. All three countries are emerging economies. Each of the studies on international implementation is a dissertation that focused on the implementation of inclusive education policy in general. I present the studies in chronological order.

Apinwong (2002) investigated issues related to the initiation and implementation of an inclusive education policy in Thailand, from the perspective of teachers and principals. The researcher used a qualitative methodology and employed a multiple case study design using purposeful sampling. In addition to interviews, Apinwong employed observation of principals, document analysis, and focus groups to collect data. Three principals, one director, and 18 teachers took part in the study. Apinwong classified the participants according to their resistance levels to inclusion. These levels included resistant, non-resistant, and mixed feelings.

When initiating inclusive education efforts, teachers and administrators in Apinwong's (2002) study expressed concerns about their lack of knowledge and information and the lack of qualified staff. In addition to these concerns, study



participants also expressed the need for support and training. The participants also identified the need for the same skills, supports, and resources during implementation. These findings are similar to those of Cox (2010), in that participants recognized the need for training before, during, and after implementation. Similar to Cross et al. (2004) adaptations and adjustments to curriculum, instruction, and assessments to capture the ability of students with special needs fairly and accurately was another concern expressed by teachers and principals.

Lack of support from parents, the community, and the Thai government emerged in this study as barriers to implementation. This finding supports that of Cross et al. (2004) who found that parents were a critical component to the implementation of services for children. A finding similar to Purcell (2003) however in that study family support while facilitative was not a critical component to implementation. Community concerns related to sensitization to the inclusion of children with special needs in regular classrooms. Apinwong (2002) also reported that while a supervisor from the education division visited the school, no comments or feedback was provided to stakeholders.

Apinwong (2002) reported the following limitations to the study: participants' lack of understanding of the questions, unwillingness to participate, poor site selection, language barriers, difficulty locating resources and documents, and distrust of the researcher. The study would have benefited from field testing of the interview instrument, which would have afforded the researcher the opportunity to address some of the issues related to language and understanding of the questions. Apinwong reported that Ministry personnel were not cooperative in providing information, and in some cases, did not know where to direct the researcher for information or documents.

Although there are many limitations to this study, I have included it because as a case study it captures some of the potential challenges, which can arise in doing research. This researcher's experience I believe can inform my study design and alert me to consider ways of addressing potential challenges as I enter into conducting a case study.

While Apinwong reportedly resided in the area in which the study took place and was a native speaker, distrust still arose as a limitation in the study. Research was not a part of the cultural norm, and participants viewed the researcher as an outsider. Participants also did not perceive any benefit to taking part in the study. Distrust, coupled with the fact that the research process was outside of their cultural norms, may have been the underlying reason for some of the limitations. The researcher may have benefited from spending time in the setting, building relationships before conducting the research.

Using qualitative and quantitative methodology, Johnstone (2005) examined the extent to which the Lesotho central ministry's policy on inclusive education had been effective in shaping education reform. Johnstone also explored the factors that contributed to or inhibited the implementation of the policy. The investigation involved interviews with ministry officials and head teachers from 21 schools, and a combination of interviews and observations in two purposely selected schools. The interview instrument was piloted in schools that were not a part of the study, but were representative of the 10 school districts in Lesotho.

Johnstone's (2005) study stands apart from other works reviewed thus far, in that it focused on both the intended implementation strategy and the actual outcomes. Johnstone's exploration revealed six major findings: (a) pedagogy only partially followed

policy; (b) the policy focus was reflected in training and teaching; (c) where implementation was present, teacher knowledge and skills were significant; (d) direct ministry training was not effective in the national diffusion of the policy; (e) incentive and accountability were lacking in implementation plans; and (f) further provision was necessary for children with more significant disabilities.

The discrepancy between pedagogy and policy was revealed in this study, Johnstone (2005) observed children with disabilities were being included as it related to enrollment but they did not participate in classroom activities, adaptations and modifications were not made to assist the children in accessing the curriculum. Johnstone reported that inclusion occurred as an add-on to practices that were already in place. The overall structure of the classroom and curriculum was not adapted as it was in the classrooms Cross et al. (2004) described as necessary to facilitate the success of students with disabilities. Johnstone reported that this lack of adaptation resulted from the training that teachers received for the implementation of inclusive education. The training focused on teachers' acceptance of students' needs, but did not focus on making classroom accommodations for students with disabilities.

Johnstone (2005) used multiple regression analysis to determine if knowledge/skills, attitude, and resources were predictors of implementation. Johnstone found that knowledge and skills were statistically significant as predictors of implementation. This finding is similar to that of Cross et al. (2004), in that teachers who perceived they were proficient in the knowledge and skills necessary to serve young children with special needs were more likely to provide inclusive services.

The MoE's Special Education Unit was responsible for all the training and dissemination of material related to inclusive education; however, the Unit was only able to reach a fraction of schools. The need for training has been a recurring theme in all the studies reviewed thus far (i.e., Cox, 2010; Cross et al., 2004; Lieber et al., 2000; Purcell, 2003, Purcell et al., 2007). This study illustrates that training is necessary and must be conducted in a way that is effective in changing behavior. Teachers received no extra funding or support for implementing inclusive education plans beyond occasional in service trainings, and there was no system of accountability for implementation built into the policy plan.

Ciyer (2010) explored themes in UNESCO policies that were reflected in inclusive education policies and practices in Turkey, stakeholders' involvement in implementing the policy, and supports and barriers to implementation. Ciyer utilized open-ended, semi-structured interviews; policy analysis; and document analysis to collect data for the study. Participants in the study included general education teachers, administrators from selected inclusive settings, policy makers from the Ministry of National Education's Special Education Office, and academic advisors from a local university.

The findings in this study were very similar to those of Cross et al., (2004) and Cox (2010) and reflected UNESCO policy. A significant difference in this study was the finding related to the role of social barriers, including community values and beliefs about the inability of children with disabilities to excel in any area and family stigma associated with raising a child with a disability. Ciyer (2010) explained that persons with disabilities typically were isolated from the mainstream community. This finding was similar to the results found in Johnstone (2005) and Apinwong (2002).

## **Summary of Review and Critique of Research on Inclusive Early Childhood Education**

In this section, I reviewed eight qualitative studies that focused on the implementation of inclusive education in early childhood settings or general school settings. During my review of these studies, I noted that the factors that served as key influences on initiation and implementation of inclusive early childhood education programs in Lieber et al., (2000); Purcell, (2003); and Purcell et al. (2007) were present in other studies as well. These key influences included personnel; shared vision; national, state, and local policies; the methods by which educational leaders implemented said policies; training and external support; organizational structure; and community influence (Lieber et al., 2000). Collaborative relationships and family supports (Purcell, 2003, Purcell et. al., 2007), along with culture and societal norms (Apinwong, 2002; Ciyer, 2010; Johnstone, 2005), served as additional key influences. Societal norms were only significant in studies conducted outside of the US.

None of the studies included in this review addressed the process of implementation. Johnstone (2005) presented data from informants that related to program installation, but his research did not probe into elements and activities involved in implementation process. While none of the studies reported on the period of time that inclusive education was being implemented, from the data presented, they were either at the initial implementation or the full implementation stages, with one exception. The programs in Cross et al.'s (2004) study seemed to be at full operation, and they had adopted some innovations. The need for the core implementation components of pre-service and in-service training, ongoing consultation, and facilitative administrative

support were noted in all the studies reviewed. Ciyer (2010) and Johnstone (2005) reported the need for program and staff evaluation. None of the studies addressed staff selection. While the participants (staff) were in place, all studies involved administrators, who may have been able to speak to the issue of staff selection. The researchers could have addressed this component of inquiry using the interview questions.

The eight studies reviewed all utilized qualitative research designs. The nature of implementation research lends itself to qualitative design because implementation inquiry seeks to understand what is driving the actions of persons in the intervention or innovation site (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009). The studies all utilized case study methodology. With the exception of Apinwong (2002), the researchers field tested their instruments and made appropriate changes made before implementing the study. Researchers also utilized documents and observations to triangulate findings, and used member checks to ensure that they accurately captured participants' responses.

The studies addressed key influences on implementation and touched on the core components of the policy implementation process. However, these researchers did not systematically analyze how the implementation of the policy moved either from the top down or bottom up, nor did they explore the ways in which stakeholders interpreted and implemented the policy at administrative or service levels. Johnstone (2005) indicated the need for this type of inquiry.

In addition to finding similar key influences in the research studies reviewed, I also noted similarities with the implementation drivers (discussed earlier in this chapter). The key influences can fit under the headings of the three types of implementation drivers; competency, organization and leadership as seen in table 2. Researchers in both

education and implementation research agree on the key influences needed for improved outcomes when a new innovation or policy is being adopted. While the education community knows the resources that educators need across levels to implement policy effectively, the service to implementation gap remains.

Through this study, I conducted research to describe the implementation process using the implementation drivers as a framework. The research explored policy implementation in Trinidad and Tobago, where educational leaders have implemented a new inclusive education initiative for students in early childhood (4 years old) through secondary school (16 years old). The information presented in the next section provides background data on the Trinidad and Tobago education system and the context for inclusive education.

**Table 2**

**Relation of Implementation Framework to Key Influences on Early Childhood Inclusion found in the Literature**

<b>Drivers</b>	<b>Components</b>	<b>Key Influences</b>
<b>Competency</b>	<b>Selection</b>	<b>Personnel</b>
	<b>Training</b>	<b>Shared Vision</b>
	<b>Coaching</b>	<b>Training and External</b>
	<b>Performance Assessment</b>	<b>Support</b>
<b>Organization</b>		<b>Collaborative Relationships</b>
	<b>Systems Intervention</b>	<b>Shared Vision</b>
	<b>Facilitative Administration</b>	<b>National and State Policies</b>
	<b>Decision Support Data System</b>	<b>Training and External</b>
		<b>Support</b>
<b>Leadership</b>		<b>Organizational Structure</b>
		<b>Collaborative Relationships</b>
	<b>Technical</b>	<b>Shared Vision</b>
	<b>Adaptive</b>	<b>Community Influence</b>
		<b>Culture and Societal Norms</b>
		<b>Family Support</b>



## **Trinidad and Tobago Context**

In this section, I provide demographic information about Trinidad and Tobago, followed by an overview of the history of both early childhood public education and care and special education services, to situate the establishment of inclusive early childhood care and education practices. This historical information is followed by a review of policies informing inclusive early childhood care education in Trinidad and Tobago. The section closes with an account of what inclusive education looks like currently.

**Demographic information.** Trinidad and Tobago form a twin island nation located at the southern end of the Caribbean archipelago. The Caribbean archipelago begins at the southern coast of the Florida peninsula and extends to the east, then south, ending with Trinidad and Tobago. The islands are located seven miles away from the coastland of Venezuela, and are divided into eight counties: Victoria, St. Patrick, St. George, Caroni, Nariva, Mayaro, St. Andrew, and St. David (Tobago is considered part of St David's county). The population estimate, based on the 2000 census, fell at 1,317,714. Of this figure, 333,965 were children aged 15 years and younger (Central Statistical Office of Trinidad and Tobago). This population is comprised of persons of African and East Indian descent (each accounting for about 40% of the population), as well as those of Lebanese, Syrian, Caucasian, Chinese and mixed heritage. Religious affiliation is very important to the community, and about 29% of the population is Roman Catholic, 24% is Hindu, 6% is Muslim, and the remaining 41% includes Presbyterians, Anglicans, Baptist, and other Christian denominations. The CIA Fact Book 2003 estimate reports that the literacy rate is 98.6%.

The nation has an oil-based economy, and while not considered developed, the World Bank (2012) considered it to have a high-income economy. The nation is a unitary state; with a government based on the bicameral Westminster model of Britain. The political landscape of the nation has had a great impact on the policies that the government historically has initiated and implemented, since regimes may differ in philosophy.

The major political parties are the People's National Movement (PNM), the United National Congress (UNC), the Congress of the People (COP), and other minor parties; including the Tobago Organization of the People (TOP), the Movement for Social Justice (MSJ), and the National Joint Action Committee (NJAC). Presently, a coalition known as the People's Partnership (PP), made up of the UNC, the COP, and other smaller parties (i.e., the Tobago Organization of the People (TOP) and the Movement for Social Justice) holds the seat of government following ten years of rule by the People's National Movement (PNM), which now forms the opposition. Under the former PNM administration, the long-term strategic plan, Vision 2020, had as a key element human resource development. As such, the administration had placed inclusive education high on the social reform agenda. At present, the PP has allowed the inclusive education trust to proceed.

**History of public education in Trinidad and Tobago.** Public education in Trinidad and Tobago dates back to 1851, during the nation's period of colonization. During this period, formal education for children focused on the primary level, and children less than five years old remained at home. Religious bodies were predominantly responsible for the establishment of schools in the islands during the colonial period.

Much of the country's upward spiraling development came because of the discovery of crude oil. Agrarian laborers quickly moved to the oil fields for employment and increased wages. Workers influenced by world trends began to form trade unions.

At the same time, local scholars started to demand active participation in the country's affairs. This combination of changes heightened parental aspirations for their children's education. The population began to view education as a path towards economic prosperity and improved living standards. By 1900, primary education had become the beginning and terminal level of education for the majority of children in Trinidad and Tobago. Education, social mobility, and economic prosperity became a real possibility in 1962, when the country gained independent status from Great Britain. The education system in Trinidad and Tobago has undergone major development since then, with many of the changes occurring concurrently with political, social, and economic developments in the republic.

Today, the education system of Trinidad and Tobago includes both public (government and government assisted) and private schools. Education in Trinidad and Tobago falls under the purview of the Ministry of Education (MoE), the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education (MSTTE), and the Tobago House of Assembly (THA). According to Act No. 40 of 1996, the THA is responsible for the administration of education in Tobago and works collaboratively with the MoE to ensure standardized practices. The MOE is the administrative authority for the pre-primary to postsecondary levels, and the Ministry of Science, Technology, and Tertiary Education (MSTTE) is responsible for tertiary level education. There are five levels in the

education system, including the pre-primary, primary, secondary, post-secondary (Advanced Proficiency and Technical/Vocational), and tertiary levels.

The present study focuses on inclusive early childhood care and education in public centers. Responsibility for public early childhood centers falls under the purview of the Early Childhood Unit of the MOE in Trinidad and Tobago. The Student Support Services Division of the MOE drives the progress of the inclusive education trust. In the following sections, I provide an overview of the development of each unit to set the context for inclusive early childhood care and education reform initiatives.

**Development of early childhood care and education.** Various stakeholders manage Early Childhood Care and Education centers in Trinidad and Tobago. These entities include government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), religious bodies, and individuals and organizations from the private sector. Several centers owned and operated by NGOs receive government subventions (supports financial or material from the government). These government-assisted centers, along with those operated by the government, form the public early childhood care and education system, my focus in this analysis. Three collaborative bodies deliver public early childhood care and education in Trinidad and Tobago: the Early Childhood Care and Education Unit, the National Council for Early Childhood Care, and Education and Community Boards. In addition to these bodies, Servol Ltd. (Service Volunteered for All) has been an important NGO contributor to the development of early childhood care and education in the republic. In the following paragraphs, I provide an overview of the development of each of these bodies as well as their functions.

**Types of early childhood centers.** At present there are a variety of terms used for early childhood care and education (ECCE) centers in Trinidad and Tobago; (a) kindergarten, (b) early childhood center, (c) preschool, (d) laboratory preschool, (e) nursery/day care center (f) Interdisciplinary child development center (Logie, 2005). The variety of programs is a reflection of the country's sociopolitical development, norms, and high education expectation of citizens. Because government run ECCE centers are just becoming the norm in the education landscape of the country it is important in describing the types of centers to include private centers. The curriculum offered at private early childhood centers is based on the personal choice of the administrator. Goals, objectives and pedagogy are therefore reflective of the administrator's attitudes and assumptions of the developmental needs of pre-school children. The Highscope Early Childhood Survey of Trinidad and Tobago (1995) reported three types of curriculum: (a) academic focused with high emphasis on reading, writing and arithmetic, (b) child centered programs with the individual needs of children being the focus in curriculum planning and (c) Montessori method in which the environment is planned for children to make choice of materials and then directed in the use of the selections. Government early childhood centers currently use the National Curriculum Guide for Early Childhood.

***Early Childhood Care and Education Unit.*** While the education system in Trinidad and Tobago has always offered some type of care and instruction for young children, government involvement in the early childhood education system began in 1970 with a pilot project funded by the Bernard van Leer Foundation. In 1974, the MoE established the Preschool Education Unit to provide oversight of the 50 government-

owned and supervised early childhood care and education centers. The Ministry renamed the initiative the Early Childhood Care and Education Unit in 1993 to reflect the department's increased scope of responsibilities and functions. The mission of the Early Childhood Care and Education Unit is to work towards restructuring and reforming early childhood care and education in Trinidad and Tobago through consultation, intersectoral collaboration, capacity building, advocacy, public sensitization, nurturance, and support aimed at enhancing the quality of programs and services.

***National Council for Early Childhood Care and Education (NCECCE).*** The Trinidad and Tobago Education Policy Paper (1993-2003) was the first policy document to include early childhood care and education as a legitimate part of the education system. By extending the MoE's terms to include children aged 0-5 years, the government demonstrated a commitment to public early childhood care and education. In addition to including early childhood care and education as part of government responsibility, the National Task Force on Education also recommended the establishment of the National Council for Early Childhood Care and Education (NCECCE). The NCECCE held its first meeting in 1994 with a mandate from the government to develop policy initiatives to encourage partnership among interest groups, including the state, the private sector, parents, educators, and caregivers. The Early Childhood Care and Education Unit is the Secretariat to the NCECCE and is the body of the council that oversees program and policy implementation.

***Community Boards.*** Each government or government-assisted early childhood care and education center has a community board. These partnerships between the government and local communities originated in 1972, when The Village Council and the

government assumed joint management of early childhood care and education centers located in small villages or towns. The boards encouraged community development through the active participation of families, center staff, and other stakeholders interested in early childhood care and education. The responsibilities of community boards include establishing center objectives, philosophies, and administrative policies. In addition, community boards determine policy on some staffing matters and attend to the business affairs of the centers.

***SERVOL Ltd.*** Servol Ltd. is a grassroots support organization that began independent work in 1970 within an economically depressed area of Trinidad. Because of poverty, lack of employment, and poor housing in this area, many mothers migrated to foreign lands to seek employment. In doing so, many left their young children with grandmothers, who in many cases were incapable of providing appropriate childcare. In 1973, Servol Ltd. built its first early childhood center in response to the needs of these families. The Servol Ltd. early childhood care and education programs are distinguished by (a) their insistence on community participation, (b) the involvement of parents in the program of activities, and (c) the extension of the children's program into the home through home visits made by staff.

Between 1986 and 1991, Servol Ltd. formed a partnership with the local government and began to receive government funding. These dollars provide support for ongoing early childhood care and education training and the management and administration of early childhood care and education centers. Servol provides services in 13 geographical education zones. A Servol field officer monitors a cluster of Servol early childhood care and education centers in each zone. Along with their supervisors,

field officers are responsible for training community members and the staff of the early childhood care and education centers in their zone. Community boards exist in each zone and act as a resource group for other boards. Servol Ltd. staff serves as an advocacy group for early childhood care and education at the community and national level.

Early childhood education and special education services in Trinidad and Tobago developed as separate initiatives. However, both units are involved in the change process developed to ensure the provision of inclusive early childhood services. The history of the development of special education services is different to that of early childhood. In the next section, I outline the development of inclusive education efforts in Trinidad and Tobago situating the discussion within the development of special education.

**Development of special education.** In Trinidad and Tobago, children with disabilities first began to receive educational services in 1940, when religious bodies, voluntary organizations, and community groups developed special education programs with funding from the government (the British Monarch at the time). Direct government involvement dates back to 1951, when the Department of Education, under the aegis of the Minister of Education and Social Services, piloted a program that introduced “special classes” for children who were “dull and backward” (Bukhan, 1981). This program resulted in the proliferation of “adjustment classes” in many primary schools (Bukhan).

Between 1951 and 1961, the Department of Education was elevated to the Ministry of Education as the country gained independence. During this time, the Ministry appeared uninvolved in the education of children with special needs. However, other government ministries, private institutions, and voluntary and professional organizations invested a great deal of resources into the affairs of this population. Table



3 denotes the schools established during this period and the agencies responsible for the schools' development.

Table 3

Schools Opened Between 1951 and 1961

Opened	School	Agency
1952	The School for the Blind	Board of Industrial Training
1967	Schools for the Deaf in Cascade and Marabella	Association in Aid of the Deaf
1953	The Princess Elizabeth Home for the Physically Handicapped	A voluntary organization
1958	School for the Mentally Handicapped	Ministry of Health
1961	The Lady Hochoy Home for Mentally Retarded Children	Corpus Christi Carmelite Sisters and the Trinidad and Tobago Association for Mentally Retarded Children

The MoE attempted to address the issue of education for children with special needs in 1961, following a memorandum from the acting superintendent of the St. Ann's Hospital to the Permanent Secretary of the MoE. The Ministry established committees to look into the educational requirements of children with special needs. Between 1966 and 1970, teachers interested in educating children with special needs took short courses organized by the MoE, in cooperation with the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Health, and the Central Training Unit.

***Special Education Unit.*** In 1966, the government established legislative provision for the education of children with special needs. In 1979, government agencies partnered with religious institutions and NGOs to incorporate Institutional Schools into the education system. National leaders then went on to establish the Special Education Unit in 1980, and charged the Unit with coordinating special education services, supervising the development of curricula for special schools, and regulating where students with special needs should enroll in school.

***Student Support Services Unit.*** In response to a recommendation in the Education Policy Paper 1993-2003 (MoE, 1993), the government in 1998 began a two year pilot offering Diagnostic Prescriptive Centers (DPC) pending the establishment of a comprehensive Student Support Services System. Reports that the DPC were having a positive impact on student achievement, despite being under-resources, alerted the MoE of the critical need for the establishment of a Comprehensive System of Student Support (MoE, 2004). As such, the Ministry established the Student Support Services System in 2004, with a central focus on supporting all students to maximize their learning potential. I provide information on the policy guiding the Student Support Services later in the section on Trinidad and Tobago's Inclusive Education Policy.

The development of the units mentioned above related closely to national policy aimed at addressing education issues in Trinidad and Tobago. In the next section, I provide a brief synopsis of the policies that have informed inclusive education in nation. I present the information in chronological order, ending with the Inclusive Education Policy (MoE, 2008).

**Education policy in Trinidad and Tobago.** The Education Act of 1966 (MOE, TT, 1966), serves as the Law of Education and the official guiding legislative document for the education system in Trinidad and Tobago. However, over the years, various departments of the MoE have developed supplemental policy documents to guide their operations. The policies relevant to this review are the Education Policy Paper 1993-2003 (MoE, 1993), the Strategic Plan for Education 2002-2006 (MoE, 2002), the Draft National Special Education Policy (MoE, 2004a), the National Policy on Student Support Services (MoE, 2004b), the National Policy on Persons with Disabilities (Ministry of Social Development [MOSD], (MOSD, 2005), and the Inclusive Education Policy (MoE, 2008). A brief synopsis of each of these policies follows.

***The Education Policy Paper 1993- 2003 and Strategic Plan for Education 2002-2006.*** The Education Policy Paper 1993- 2003 (MoE, 1993), and the Strategic Plan for Education 2002-2006 (MoE, 2002) are products of an overhauling of the Education System of Trinidad and Tobago. The documents demonstrated the government's commitment to the education of all children by espousing the belief that "every child has the ability to learn ..." (MoE, 1993). The Strategic Plan for Education (MoE, 2002) built upon this belief with the following objectives: (a) accessibly to educational opportunities for all, (b) delivery of quality education to citizens at all levels of the education system, (c) sustainable policy development for the education sector, and (d) continuous alignment of the strategic direction in the education system with the objectives set for National Development. While neither the Education Policy Paper nor the Strategic Plan made any mention of international policies, the language used to frame

the first two objectives of the Strategic Plan was very similar to the language of the EFA declaration (UNESCO, 1990b, 2000).

***National Policy on Student Support Services.*** The 2004 National Policy on Student Support Services sought to extend the objective of accessibility to educational opportunities for all stated in the Strategic Plan (MOE 2002). This policy outlined the establishment of the Student Support Services System in the MoE. The focus of the Student Support Services System was on supporting all students using an interdisciplinary model with stakeholders from the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Development, the Office of the Prime Minister, and key non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The policy referenced and built upon the Education Act of 1966 (MOE, 1966), the Education Policy Paper 1993-2003 (MoE, 1993), and the Strategic Plan 2002-2006 (MoE, 2002). The policy aimed to offer support in early intervention through diagnosis and remediation starting in early childhood. The document identified children with special educational needs as children with deficits of hearing, vision, or mobility, but without serious mental or emotional problems; children who are educationally disadvantaged; children with significant learning difficulties; children with emotional or learning difficulties; and children who are gifted and talented (MoE, 2004b).

***The Draft National Special Education Policy.*** The Draft National Special Education Policy (MOE, 2004a) built upon the previous policy documents and sought to further the objective of providing educational opportunities for all students through an inclusive education system. The policy objectives focused on an inclusive education system for the full integration and participation of all students. The Draft Policy document defined inclusion as follows:

Inclusion is an effort to ensure that students with special educational needs attend schools along with their siblings, friends and neighbours, while also receiving the specially designed instruction and support they need to succeed as learners and to achieve to the highest possible standards (p. 8).

Additionally, the document described children with a special needs as having the following characteristics:

- a) significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of the same age, and
- b) a disability that either prevents or hinders him from making use of educational facilities of the kind normally available in school for children his age.

For the child who is under five years of age – a child has Special educational needs if he is likely to fall into either of the above categories when he attains school age. (p. 8)

The framework of the Draft National Special Education Policy outlined efforts to provide an inclusive education system and acknowledged that the initiative required a “re-thinking of the provision of education” (p. 23).

***National Policy on Persons with Disabilities.*** As the Government of Trinidad and Tobago moved toward the realization of developed country status by 2020, different ministerial units sought to align their agendas with efforts to realize the vision. The Ministry of Social Development, like the MoE, developed a National Policy on Persons with Disabilities (MOSD, 2005). The government of Trinidad and Tobago approved the document in 2005, following a series of public consultations. The National Policy on

Persons with Disabilities served to unify the diverse pieces of legislation developed to serve persons with disabilities. The policy objectives related to the equality of human rights and opportunity, the creation of opportunities for integration and full participation for all persons with disabilities, and the elimination of discrimination against persons with disabilities. These policy objectives aligned with those listed in international policies like the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons (UN, 1975), The World Declaration on the Rights of the Disabled, The Tallinn Guidelines, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. On a local level, they captured the intent of the Draft National Special Education Policy (MoE, 2004a).

The National Policy on Persons with Disabilities (MOSD, 2005) sought to address all areas that may impact persons with disabilities. The Institutional Arrangements referred to strengthening legislation and administration for alignment with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNESCO, 2008). The national policy document specifically called for a review of and amendments to existing legislation to eliminate discrimination and prejudice and promote equality of opportunity. The National Policy also called for the provision of adequate and appropriate support services for all children with disabilities in an inclusive education system, beginning at the Early Childhood Care and Education level. The policy also mandated the development of modules in the curriculum at the Early Childhood Care and Education Centres to instill in students respect for, acceptance and appreciation of the differences among people.

***The Inclusive Education Policy.*** The MOE developed the Inclusive Education Policy of Trinidad and Tobago (MoE, 2008) to reform, expand, and modernize the education system and to recognize the international commitments of various nations to providing access, equity, and quality education to all learners. The local policies that guided the inclusive education policy included the National Policy on Persons with Disabilities (MOSD, 2005), Vision 2020 (TT, 2008), the Education Act No. 7 of 1966, and the Equal Opportunities Act No. 69 (TT, 2000). The international documents guiding the policy included the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNESCO, 1990a), the United National Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (UN, 1993), the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), and the Dakar World Education Forum (UNESCO, 2000).

The MOE developed the Inclusive Education Policy following two years of public consultations. Policy implementation began in 2009. The policy applied to all government, government-assisted, and private schools, from early childhood programs through secondary and special education institutions. The policy defined inclusive education in as “a developmental process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning cultures and communities” (p. 2).

### **Status of Inclusive Early Childhood Education in Trinidad and Tobago**

At the time of the study, the characteristics of the landscape for young children with special needs in Trinidad and Tobago is deeply embedded in the historical, religious, social, and political development of the twin island nation. The variety of programs

reflects of the country's sociopolitical development, its norms, and the high educational expectations of its citizens. The school system also reflects the rich religious heritage of the islands, as many primary and secondary schools fall under the administration of religious bodies that receive funding through subventions (subsidies from the government). Recently, religious boards have established a number of early childhood centers (Logie, nd). At the time of the study, the islands are home to approximately 150 government or government assisted early childhood centers serving children between the ages of 3 and 4+ years and over 147 registered private centers. It is essential to note that many early childhood centers are not registered with the MoE. Public centers employ teachers who have training in early childhood care and education, and the centers primarily provide services for lower-income groups (Logie & Weikart, 1998). Owners or administrators of privately run centers typically have some training; however, their teachers may have minimal training in early childhood education.

Much of the literature demonstrates a disparity between the availability of early childhood education services in rural, suburban, and urban areas (UNESCO, 2007). This disparity exists in Trinidad and Tobago as well, where fewer early childhood centers are located in rural areas. Whether public or private, early childhood centers in Trinidad and Tobago face challenges related to finances, quality training, and type of curriculum delivered. A new awakening in the consciousness of the population has led to a decrease in the stigmatization and concealment of young children with disabilities. Advertisement campaigns that publicize well-known nationals who have disabilities and are successful in their careers have facilitated this shift in the nation's cultural paradigm.



The impetus behind early childhood education and inclusion is linked to the ruling party governing the country. International financing agreements and pressure from more economically powerful and stable countries in the north to conform to or adopt international policies also has influenced Trinidad and Tobago's efforts to promote early childhood education and inclusive education.

### **Summary and Next Steps**

In this section, I presented the context of Trinidad and Tobago and explored the development of early childhood and special education departments in the country. I also presented the components of the policy governing the nation's inclusive education efforts. This study investigated the implementation of an inclusive early childhood care and education innovation in one country, Trinidad and Tobago. In the study I examine how organizational understanding of the inclusive education policy has influenced the implementation process at the early childhood level.

In the two preceding chapters, I argued that a need exists for inquiry into the implementation of inclusive education policy at the early childhood level. The study employed the implementation framework of Fixsen and Blasé (2008) to assess how the components of implementation have been used in the implementation process of inclusive education in Trinidad and Tobago. I used different qualitative approaches to describe how various stakeholders are proceeding with the process of implementation of inclusive education.

The research questions that sought to answer relate to policy implementation and change in practitioner behavior. The questions identify the influence or practices that are impacting how practitioners at early childhood centers are working to include children

with disabilities and special needs. The practice of inclusion as it occurs currently is also be reported. As part of the study, I conducted interviews with decision makers at the highest level of government, directors and supervisors with responsibility for process implementation, and practitioners who provide services to children with disabilities and special needs and their families.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

In this chapter, I present methods for conducting the study. First, I describe the design and methodology. Next I provide information on the site and procedures for participant selection. Then I outline the methods used to collect information. Immediately thereafter I illustrate my analysis procedures, followed by the strategies for ensuring credibility and trustworthiness of my study. I then characterize my biases and ethical considerations in conducting the study. I end with a summary and review of the research questions.

#### **Study Design**

To unveil the complexity of inclusive education implementation from various sources, I used qualitative methodology to assess implementation progress utilizing the implementation framework of Fixsen and Blasé (2008) and the UNESCO Guidelines for Inclusion (2005). The qualitative case study design was used to identify from those involved in implementation of the inclusion policy what decisions were made and why, how they were implemented, and with what outcomes. I used a survey (Creswell, 2009) to assess implementation climate at the early childhood level as progress with implementation continues.

I used a qualitative case study because I was interested in eliciting personal accounts of what occurred from those who have experienced the implementation of inclusive education policies. My interests, according to Creswell (2009), Patton (2002) and Yin (2009), make case study an appropriate design for the research. These authors recommend a qualitative approach when the focus is on in-depth exploration of a system,

a phenomenon, an activity, a process, or one or more individuals, bounded by time and activity (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2012).

Merriam (2009) also suggests that researchers conduct qualitative studies when “the focus is on process, understanding meaning; the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis; the process is inductive and the product richly descriptive” (p. 14). My study closely aligns with Merriam’s guidelines. To start, I aimed to understand from those directly involved how implementation of inclusive education policy is proceeding. Second, I was the instrument in collecting and analyzing data. Third, in analyzing the data I used both deductive and inductive coding, allowing the emergence of patterns, categories, and themes. I also supported those themes with quotations in order to provide rich descriptions of the research.

Yin (2003) explains a case study is a “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 13), and the actions taken by an individual and the circumstances that lead to the action are not always clearly distinguishable. The “phenomenon” under investigation here was the implementation of inclusive education at pilot early childhood centers in Trinidad and Tobago. A case study typically examines the actions of one group, (here, those involved in implementing inclusive education); and as this study focuses on one country (Trinidad and Tobago); this at is the unit of analysis for this case.

### **Case and Site Selection**

I selected Trinidad and Tobago because it is considered a developing nation and has recently piloted inclusive education throughout the education system. The MOE

along with the Tobago House of Assembly (THA), are the administrative authorities for the pre-primary to postsecondary levels of education. This case study focused specifically on the persons who were and are currently involved in the implementation of inclusive education on the island. These included decision makers, supervisors, and practitioners. The practitioners came from schools called early childhood care and education centers. I initially selected the eight pilot inclusive early childhood centers – one in each education district, including Tobago – identified by the government of Trinidad and Tobago. As I will explain under the recruitment and procedures sections, only the centers in Trinidad were involved in this study.

Because this was a case study with various individuals at different levels of the government, I used multiple instruments, in order to capture as much data related to the topic as possible. The use of multiple instruments and various informants allowed me to cast a wide net for data gathering and triangulation (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). In the next section, I review the instruments used for the study.

### **Instrumentation**

I used several instruments to aid data collection. In this section, I review the creation and/or modification of these instruments in the following order: a) survey, b) interview protocol, c) observation guide and d) document summary form.

**Survey.** In order to quantify the implementation climate, I used items adapted from the climate section of the survey, “Measures of Implementation Components of the National Implementation Research Network Frameworks,” developed by Fixsen, Panzano, Naoom, and Blasé (2008). The 32 statements on the Fixsen, et al. survey are from the work of Klein and Sorra (1996) and Panzano and colleagues (2004; 2006).

Cronbach's alpha of the 32 items testing for implementation climate is 0.8, indicating high internal consistency and validity. In addition to the 32 questions, I included the following three statements on the survey: -

- Ministry officials made the guidelines for implementing inclusive education clear to teachers' who have to implement the policy.
- Staff receives supervision and coaching related to implementing inclusive education on a regular basis.
- Experts in inclusive education have provided training for teachers implementing inclusive education.

These three statements come from other parts of the Fixsen, et al. (2008) assessment components. I included these three statements because those on the climate scale did not specifically address these issues. To be sure that I did not compromise the reliability and validity of the data I gathered, I conducted a Cronbach's alpha test using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS); the resulting score was 0.907.

To ensure that teachers in Trinidad and Tobago would easily understand the survey, I had professionals in the field of early childhood education and special education review and comment on the statements. There were five reviewers, two current lecturers in Early Childhood Education at the University of The West Indies Trinidad and Tobago, a retired special education school supervisor, an early childhood developmental specialist, and a teacher from a privately operated early childhood center, all of whom are citizens and residents of Trinidad and Tobago. Their reviews and comments led to rewording of some survey statements for clarity. The final survey instrument (see Appendix C) uses a Likert rating scale like that of Fixsen and colleagues with the

following ratings: “Strongly Disagree,” “Disagree,” “Neither Agree nor Disagree,” “Agree,” “Strongly Agree,” and two additional items: “Does Not Exist in our organization” and “Don’t Know.”

**Interview Protocol.** I developed an open-ended interview protocol by adapting items from eight sections of the “Measures of Implementation Components of the National Implementation Research Network Frameworks” (Fixsen, et al., 2008). To ensure rich and descriptive responses, I developed probes to supplement each of the interview items (see Appendix D). I used the same team of professionals who reviewed the survey questions to review the questions and probes on the interview protocol. There were no changes recommended to the wording of the interview items.

**Observation Guide.** In addition to administering a survey and conducting interviews, I also conducted in-depth observations of the innovation-inclusive education being implemented at a target early childhood center. To ensure that I was collecting pertinent information, I utilized an observation guide, which included descriptive and reflective information (see Appendix E). Descriptive information captured a chronology of activities as they occurred during the observations. “Reflective information” refers to my perceptions or awareness of changes, such as: a) interactions between teachers and children (for example, a teacher engaging a child in an activity that seems prompted by researcher proximity or presence); b) changes in center or group daily routine because of researcher or cluster manager presence; c) differences in adult interactions as a result of researcher presence. Reflections also included notes of behaviors or exchanges I observed that required further consideration.

**Document Summary Form.** Finally, I created a document summary form

(Appendix F) to summarize, clarify, and keep a record of the documents I reviewed. In summary, the instruments used to collect data for addressing my research questions included a survey, an interview protocol, an observation guide, and a document summary form.

### **Recruitment and Procedures**

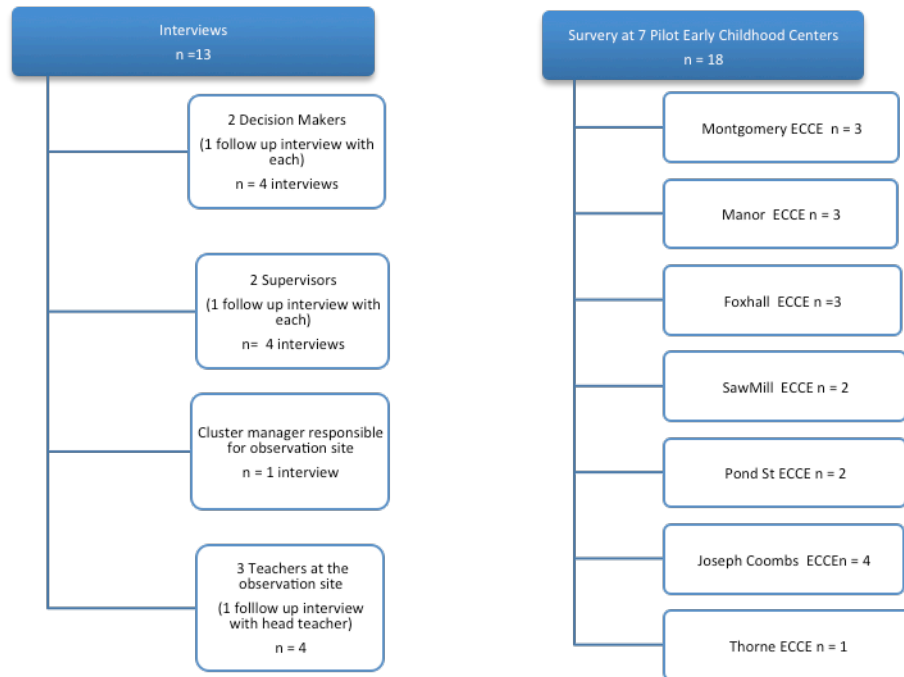
Upon my arrival in Trinidad (2012), I learned that there had been a change in government. This new administration assumed power in 2011 and placed all projects and contracts from the previous government on hold. The change in government and these actions had a direct impact on this case study. While I had projected that there would be five teachers at each early childhood center, some had only one. Some decision-making positions were vacant, with previous office holders having taken early retirement. I conducted nine interviews with officials, surveyed 18 teachers at seven centers in which the government is currently piloting inclusive education, and observed practices at the center which was the first to begin the pilot initiative. In this section, I detail my recruitment and selection procedures.

According to the implementation model of Fixsen, et al (2008) and the literature reviewed for this study, three groups of key informants are needed when assessing the implementation progress of a policy, project, or initiative. The three groups are the *practitioners* who provide service to the children and families, the *supervisors or coaches* who provide oversight to the practitioners, and *decision makers* who are responsible for the overall organization or part of the organization in which the practitioners and supervisors work. I conducted interviews with decision makers and supervisors. I administered a survey focused on implementation climate with practitioners at pilot early



childhood centers. At the center where the innovation was first started, I conducted additional interviews with practitioners and observed inclusive education in practice. The recruitment of participants was deliberate and purposeful. Figure 5 presents the number of surveys and interviews conducted.

Figure 5: Number of Surveys and Interviews Conducted



As a former employee of the MOE I knew I needed to “follow chain of command,” to get the best involvement. Recruitment and involvement of lower-level informants in implementation of inclusive education depended on participation of top-level informants. I recount the recruitment and selection of participants in the order they occurred for this reason: first, decision makers, followed by supervisors, both groups of persons with whom I conducted open-ended interviews. Third, I report on the recruitment of the practitioners from seven government pilot inclusive centers; who completed the survey. Finally, I discuss the selection of one center from the seven pilot centers. At this center, I conducted interviews (with the teachers and cluster manager) and observed interactions of children and teachers during the day.

### **Interviews with Decision-makers**

I learned that many senior decision makers of the MOE central office, Student Support Services Unit and Early Childhood Unit had retired or resigned months before I arrived in Trinidad and Tobago. None of these positions had been filled, nor were any procedures in place to fill them. I selected the retired decision makers because they were the most knowledgeable about the process of implementing inclusive education, since much of the planning took place during their tenure in office. Having worked in the MOE, I was able to make inquiries of mutual acquaintances I had there to gain contact information for the three retired individuals. I contacted each person by telephone, shared information about my research, and asked for his or her participation. All three agreed. To preserve anonymity I refer to all of these interviewees as ministry officials or directors. After meeting each person at the agreed time and place, I again shared the purpose of my visit and obtained informed consent before beginning the interviews. All

three agreed to have their interviews recorded. I presented each with a University of Maryland pad folio as a token of thanks at the end of the interview.

### **Supervisor Interviews**

The relevant persons in supervisory roles had held their positions prior to the change in government and could provide information about the process as it was and continues. Although I had fair knowledge of the persons involved in the inclusive implementation project, I needed to verify that my information was correct. During the interview with a decision maker in Student Support Services (SSS) Unit, I inquired about the person who was currently working on the project. This decision maker provided the name and number for the other decision makers. I did the same while interviewing the retired director of ECCE service. The director also provided the name and contact information for the person. I contacted the supervisors for each division by telephoning their offices and asking to speak with them. I shared why I was calling and asked if they would participate in the study. They each agreed. I met and interviewed each of the supervisors at their office. Upon arrival at each person's office, I again shared the purpose of my visit and obtained informed consent before beginning the interviews. The decision maker at the SSS unit agreed to be audio recorded. However, the curriculum facilitator at the ECCE division declined; I therefore took copious notes. I presented both supervisors with a University of Maryland pad folio as a token of thanks at the end of the interview.

While conducting the interview at the early childhood unit, I asked for contact information for each of the early childhood centers involved in the inclusive education pilot initiative. At this point, I became aware of a new structure of the Early Childhood

Unit and the administration of early childhood centers throughout the nation. The new government administrators had placed all contracts and projects on hold. This hold included the contracts of all personnel of the Early Childhood Unit. In cases where employee contracts came to an end, the government had not renewed employment. This action affected the number of officers at the supervisory level in the ECCE division as well as the number of practitioners. I was also informed of a new policy to gain research permission from the Education Planning Unit before entering any government-run school or center. I had to complete and submit this document for approval to have access to the practitioners and/or teachers.

### **Practitioner survey**

To recruit the practitioners or teachers for the study, I contacted the MOE's Educational Planning Division, to notify the division about my research and request contact information for the eight schools. I was asked to complete, and completed, an Application Form: Permission to Conduct Research in Schools. A copy of the completed application is attached as Appendix G. After waiting approximately two months, I received a letter granting permission and access to the eight early childhood centers. A copy of the approval letter is attached as Appendix H.

I contacted the MOE's Early Childhood Unit to get the name and contact information for administrators at each center. I obtained the telephone numbers for cluster managers of each center in my study as well as the address and telephone number for the centers. I contacted each cluster manager by telephone, identified myself, how I came to have their number, providing brief information about the survey, and asking for the best time to visit the center to administer the survey.

The cluster managers in Trinidad agreed that I could visit the centers and shared that they would contact the head teachers to verify the best time to visit. Some administrators returned my telephone call providing the best day and time to visit the centers, others I called back after a day or two get the best time to visit the center. The cluster administrator in Tobago indicated that two studies were currently being conducted at that center and declined to have teachers at the center participate in my study. Therefore, the centers involved in the study were all located in Trinidad.

I implemented the survey with teachers at the seven early childhood centers, where a pilot initiative of inclusive education had been put in place by the government. A total of 18 teachers participated. Table 4 shows the demographics of the seven centers. I visited each center on the day and time agreed. I identified myself to the security officer on site and was escorted to the office, where I met with the head teacher. I introduced myself, shared my purpose for visiting and information about the study. We then discussed preferences for having each teacher complete the study.

At six of the centers I remained in the office and spoke with each teacher privately. I reviewed the consent form with each teacher, who then signed the document, before I provided the survey instrument. A copy of the consent form was provided to each participant. Upon completion of the survey, I thanked the teacher by providing a University of Maryland tote bag as a token of thanks for participation, and waited for the next teacher to come into the office.

At one center, the head teacher gathered all the teachers together in a circle and asked that I share the information about the study to the group. I followed the same protocol as I did when meeting with teachers privately. I answered questions related to

the consent form and gathered all the consent forms before distributing the survey, along with the token of thanks. At the end of the visit to each center, I assigned an alphanumeric code to each booklet to identify the school.

Table 4

Demographics of 7 Pilot Early Childhood Centers					
Name of Early Childhood Center	Number of children on roster	Teachers allocated to center	Teachers on roster		Number of teachers completing survey
			Male	Female	
Montgomery	40	5	-	3	3
Manor	45	5	-	3	3
Foxhall	44	5	-	3	3
SawMill	42	5	-	3	2
Pond St	44	5	-	2	2
Joseph Coombs	45	5	-	4	4
Thorne	43	5	-	3	1
Total		40		21	18

### Selection of observation site

I conducted observations at one ECCE center. The supervisor at the ECCE unit shared that centers began operating as pilots at different times. We discussed possibilities of doing observations and agreed upon the center that had been operating as an inclusive government early childhood center longest. I agreed, since the practitioners at that center were likely to have more detailed information about the implementation process.

I contacted the cluster manager and shared information about the observation component of the study. She had a staff meeting at the center planned for that week and invited me to attend and share the information and request with the teachers so that they could all make a decision on participating. The staff meeting was held in the morning, before children arrived. The three teachers, the cluster manager, and I attended the meeting. I shared information about my study, including the observation component as

well as the request for teacher interviews during the observation period.

The teachers all agreed to have a researcher at the center. It was agreed that I should send consent forms to all parents, since their teachers' groups varied during the day. One week before beginning the observations, teachers distributed a cover letter and consent form (Appendices I and J) to each parent. One parent contacted me by telephone for more information. Many parents returned the consent form by the stipulated date. At the start of observations, I collected all the signed forms, photocopied them, and gave copies to the head teacher for return to the parents.

My observations were focused on teacher-child interactions, how children interacted among each other, teaching strategies, learning activities, use of materials, use of space, and grouping size. Observations were conducted from 8:30 am to 3:30 pm Monday through Friday. I observed morning assembly, one group activity in the morning, and another group activity in the afternoon. These activities lasted between 15 and 30 minutes.

No child enrolled at the center had a documented disability. I asked the head teacher if she noticed any child having difficulty or suspected a child had some type of special need. She identified five children. While I observed the group I focused my attention on two children who were in the same group. The current government had started an intervention at the pilot school. I also observed the interventionist conducting the intervention. I shared my research interest with her and asked if she would agree to be interviewed. She declined offering an explanation captured in my field notes. She shared that during her training they (group of interventionists) were cautioned about sharing information about the project with anyone.



There were three groups of children. While I observed the same group each day, I did not identify to teachers which group was being observed for the purpose of my research. I observed the group for 10-minute intervals during group activities. I used a clipboard and pen to record my observations; occasionally I used my iPhone to take pictures. I set my iPhone to vibrate at 10-minute intervals and kept it on my person throughout the day.

On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings, I started observations focused on my target group. When my phone vibrated, I would look in the direction of another group for the ten-minute interval. During that time I filled in some of the jottings I had made during the observation or complete a diagram of space layout. When my phone vibrated again, I returned attention to my group of interest. When the next vibration occurred, I situated myself as if observing to the third group.

On Tuesday and Thursday mornings, I started with either of the other groups and then observed my target group for 10 minutes. I did the reverse in the afternoon. On Tuesday and Thursday, I followed the children during indoor free play and on Wednesday and Thursday I followed them during outdoor free play.

I conducted interviews with the three teachers at the observation center on different days, all occurring during the children's nap/quiet time. The interviews were conducted in the office. I reviewed with each teacher the consent form, drawing their attention to the fact that it was different from the one completed for the survey and also asked for permission to record the interview. After signing the forms and giving the teacher a copy, I began the interview.

Each of the teacher interviews lasted approximately 15 to 20 minutes. Scheduling

time to interview the cluster manager was challenging. I was only able to interview her the day before my last observation. We met in the office as well, and I followed the same protocol as with the other teachers.

Observations concluded when I began recording similar behaviors each day. In total, observations lasted two weeks and three days. At the end of the observation period, I provided pizza and juice to the students and teachers. In addition to the University of Maryland tote bag that teachers had received when completing the survey, I also gave each a small box of chocolates on my last day at the center.

### **Document Review**

During my study, I reviewed over 30 documents; that included newspaper articles, advertisements, newsletters from the MOE, various policy reports developed by different divisions or units of the MOE, loan applications to the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), loan approvals from the IDB, reports submitted to the ministry from different international consultants, and various websites. I accessed the documents from the offices of the decision makers and supervisors during a prior visit to Trinidad and Tobago. While in the nation for the study, I asked various decision makers and supervisors for suggestions and recommendations of other documents relevant to the study.

I selected documents, which provided context for inclusive education implementation for the exploration state to the current time. The change in government was another factor in document selection since reform started under a previous government and continued in a different way when the new government took office. I created PDFs of hardcopy documents and webpages; these were uploaded into a folder

called “documents” in my research library for Atlas.ti. I analyzed documents using the same codebooks identified previously, while also remaining open to emerging patterns in the documents.

In summary, to collect data I conducted nine interviews: three decision makers from the MOE, two supervisors from MOE, a cluster manager, and three teachers at the observation center. I surveyed 18 teachers at seven early childhood centers. In addition to interviewing and administering a survey, I observed inclusive education in practice at a selected center. I also reviewed documents related to inclusive education policy and kept field notes.

### **Organization and Management**

I used my password-protected iPhone to capture digital audio recordings of interviews. These audio recordings were transferred from the iPhone to my password-protected computer soon after interviews. I transcribed the digitally recorded audio interviews into Microsoft Word documents and used pseudonyms to obscure details that could aid in identifying participants. I further found it necessary to be purposively ambiguous when discussing some of the findings, including details of participants’ positions and roles to protect their identity. I placed all hardcopies of documents into a locked file drawer at my home. When traveling, I kept these documents in my carry-on baggage.

### **Analysis Procedures**

**Survey.** I entered by hand all survey data into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and then exported them into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). I analyzed data from the survey, using SPSS. Nominal variables, like gender, education, and

position, I labeled using categorical scores. I labeled gender, for example: Male=1, Female= 2. The continuous variables, such as age and years of teaching, I categorized into intervals, for example, age: 1 = 20 years or fewer; 2 = 21-30 years; 3 = 31-40 years; 4 = 41-50 years; 5 = 50-60 years; and, 6 = 61 or more years. Items on the Likert scale were labeled 1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Neither Agree nor Disagree; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly Agree; and two additional items: 77=Does Not Exist in our organization, and 88=Don't Know; Missing items I labeled 99.

Once the data were entered into SPSS, I calculated descriptive statistics, using frequencies. I did not run any inferential statistics because the sample size was small. Responses to the open-ended question on the survey formed qualitative survey data. I transcribed the responses into a Microsoft Word document and uploaded them to the qualitative data analysis and research software Atlas.ti. I report results in the next chapter beginning with the survey.

**Qualitative.** Analysis of qualitative data is a highly structured process of searching, sorting, and arranging relevant data to find meaning (Yin, 2012). Meaning in this sense is found by identifying patterns in the data that become categories. Through careful reading and reviewing of the data, these categories generate themes or theories (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2012). Yin (2012) proposed that a researcher can rely on theoretical propositions as one strategy for analyzing data.

I analyzed data using the theoretical framework approach as well as the data-driven approach. Using both the deductive theory and the inductive data-driven approaches (Patton, 2002) allowed the conceptual framework of Fixsen and Blasé (2008), Lieber, et al. (2000), and UNESCO Guidelines for Inclusive Education (2005) to remain

the central tenets for deducting meaning, while still allowing for patterns, categories, and themes to inductively emerge from the data.

Inductive data analysis is an analytic process of coding data so that concepts can be identified and sorted into categories for the generation of themes or theories (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2012). The codes are tags that assign meaning to descriptive data in the study; thus, codes are usually attached to the word, phrase, sentence, or paragraph to which they refer (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Coding for categories and then searching for patterns is done during the analysis. In deductive data analysis, codes are used as a guide to organize the data for later interpretation. The researcher defines the codebook before starting data analysis. I created the codebook (Appendix K) using: a) the conceptual framework of Fixsen and Blasé (2008); b) the key influences of Lieber et al. (2000); c) UNESCO Guidelines for Inclusive Education (2005); d) the research questions, and e) information from the literature review.

All interviews were transcribed into Microsoft Word documents. Although I did some of the transcriptions, I found it necessary for someone familiar with nuances of the speech patterns of persons from Trinidad and Tobago to review each transcript. I listened to each interview and made edits to transcripts as needed. All electronic transcripts, documents, and observations were uploaded into Atlas.ti and organized into folders. As a qualitative data analysis and research tool, Atlas.ti does not analyze the data for the researcher, but rather provides a system to classify, sort, and arrange data.

***Coding data.*** Using the deductive analytic technique, I read the documents, interviews, and observations as well as the Implementation Codebook, and began assigning the predetermined codes to meaningful segments of data. I used the memo

feature of the software to enter any observations or concerns that arose during the process, mainly those related to new codes, which were emerging. After coding all the data using the implementation components codebook, I categorized the coded data segments into the predetermined code families using the code manager feature. I then reread the data and assigned codes to text using the key influences codebook. The same procedure was followed.

Although these predetermined codes guided my analysis of the data, I remained open to new codes, which developed inductively. After categorizing the coded data into the predetermined families, I then looked at the codes developed inductively. Some of these codes formed subcategories of codes developed prior to data analysis.

### **Credibility and trustworthiness**

Brantlinger, et al. (2005), offer several strategies to ensure the soundness of qualitative studies. I reflected on each and selected those most appropriate to this mixed methods case study. The credibility measures I used were: a) triangulation; b) member checks; c) peer debriefing; d) prolonged engagement; e) audit trail; f) thick, detailed description; g) particularizability; h) disconfirming evidence; and, i) researcher reflexivity. In this section I describe how I utilized each measure.

**Triangulation.** Triangulation involves the use of many sources of data to confirm emerging findings (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Brantlinger, et al, 2005; Merriam, 2009). My data came from various sources, including survey interviews, observations, documents, and field notes. In addition to the various types of collection modes, I also triangulated using multiple sources for information. The data collected came from persons holding different offices in the MOE. These multiple informants serve as a

further way to triangulate the data.

**Member checks.** Throughout the data collection and analysis phases of the research, I conducted member checks. I asked each participant to review interview transcripts or summaries to ensure accuracy (Brantlinger, et al, 2005; Merriam, 1998). I also made checks during interviews; for example, I stated what I understood the participant to be saying and asked if it was correct. After reviewing and coding documents, I provided the participants an opportunity to comment on my interpretation of their perceptions and the information conveyed.

**Peer debriefing.** I built peer review, in accordance with Merriam's (2002) guidelines, into the research. A colleague who holds a Ph.D. in Early Childhood Education, with over 15 years' experience conducting research and currently a research affiliate with the University of Maryland served as my peer debriefer. She worked closely with me during my analyses. She coded two interviews using paper and pencil. We had 80% agreement on the coding. She also read and provided feedback on my interpretations at various stages of the data collection and analysis.

**Prolonged field engagement.** I stayed in the field for five months. Some of this time was spent waiting for approval through the new system to gain entry into government-operated early childhood centers. During my time in the country, I visited many education offices involved with inclusive education. I conducted in-depth interviews with multiple informants' sources, and collected documents related to inclusive education. In addition, I observed teachers and children in the early childhood setting. These observations were repetitive – over two weeks – and can substantiate what I have reported.

**Audit trail.** In order to keep track of interviews, observations, and time spent extracting information from documents; I tried to keep a running calendar. This document, while not always up to date, assisted in substantiating “that adequate time was spent in the field to claim dependable and credible results” (Brantlinger, et al. 2005). The calendar documented the days and times I spoke with individuals on the phone, the date and times I had to visit schools to conduct interviews, and dates and times for meetings with retired decision makers and current supervisors. It serves as confirmation that sufficient time was spent in the field and with a cross-section of participants to substantiate results as credible and confirmable.

**Description and particularizability.** In reporting the results of the study, I use rich, thick, and detailed descriptions to provide evidence of how I interpreted and drew conclusions from the information gathered. These details include quotations from participants, descriptions from observations, and entries in documents. In documenting the cases, I used sufficient information to ensure that readers can make judgments about the degree of transferability to their particular situation (Brantlinger, et al, 2005).

**Balancing Specificity and Anonymity.** Thick and rich-descriptions are keys to the quality of case study research (Merriam, 1998; Mertens, 1998). To protect informants, however, I found it necessary to be purposively ambiguous when discussing some of the findings, including details of participants’ positions and roles. This may limit the thickness and richness of the descriptive data.

**Researcher reflexivity.** I believe that our cultural orientations have a great impact on the person we are and what we hold to be normal. It is based on our cultural orientation and understanding that we make sense of our day-to-day experiences. The



history of a people has a great deal to do with the shaping of their cultural orientation and each cultural group has a different historical experience. Having lived in the United States for the past eight years, I am conscious of having adopted some American mannerisms and expectations: for example, assuming that I will find working technology. I tried hard to work within the parameters of the limited use of technology, but it was very frustrating.

On the other hand, doing research and gathering data is an enterprise that, as locals, we often associate with foreigners. In many instances, foreign researchers appear interested in our local context only as far as it serves their purpose for the research. As I conducted my study, my participants became aware that I had been following the progress of inclusive education. Some of the participants in the survey and teachers at the observation site were pursuing degrees or doing coursework in early childhood education or special education. Many asked for feedback on assignments they were submitting, which I provided because I believe in being open to assisting others that I showed in this way my commitment to effect positive change in the lives of the children and teachers.

Reflecting on the research experience, I realize that my role as previous insider of the education system in Trinidad and Tobago likely had a significant effect on the design of the study, selection of interviewees and the implementation of my study. Before beginning my graduate studies in the United States I worked for several years as a teacher in the Ministry of Education in Trinidad. I held a post as a teacher in the Early Childhood Division for a number of years, and then within the Special Education Unit. At the time both units were very small and teachers and administrators worked closely as

a team. I resigned from the Ministry and assumed the post of Director of the Pre- K to Grade 1 section of a private school. During my time at this school I was tasked with designing and implementing an inclusive program. Too do so I collaborated with my former Ministry of Education colleagues. In addition to being Director at this school I also did adjunct lecturing at the University of the West Indies in the Early Childhood Care and Education program. I was also a very active member of the National Association for Early Childhood Care and Development (NAECCD). I maintained contact with many administrators, fellow teachers and some students. These connections afforded me a unique advantage in being able to contact persons who were former Ministry officials and decision makers which allowed me to access the persons with relevant information related to my research who were not longer employed by the Ministry of Education. However, since I had also been outside of the country and the government system for some time I was not acquainted with persons holding positions under the current government and therefore could not gain access to several key informants who might have enriched the research.

### **Ethical Issues**

The nature of qualitative research provides potential for conflict (Gay et al, 2006). It is important that the researcher respect the rights, needs, values, and desires of the participants. I will now review the steps I took to ensure I was being ethical in the conduct of my research.

I completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI), offered by the university and compulsory for all persons doing investigations involving human subjects. The CITI is considered the gold standard in online human subject's research

training. I applied and gained consent to conduct the study from the Institutional Review Board of my university.

I presented the intent of the study orally and in print on informed consent forms in a way that the participants readily understood. As part of the informed consent, the participants were assured that participation was voluntary and that they could choose to stop participating at any time. I obtained signed informed consent forms from each participant before proceeding with any data collection. To protect privacy and ensure confidentiality, I use pseudonyms throughout the study. As the primary research agent, I keep all electronic documents and audio files on my password-protected computer. Hardcopies of documents are in a locked file cabinet at my residence. I provided interview participants the option to review a synopsis of their interview or the verbatim transcripts.

### **Summary**

This mixed method case study revealed the process used by the former government in implementation of the inclusive education policy in Trinidad and Tobago, specifically at the early childhood level. The study employed the implementation framework of Fixsen and Blasé (2008), identifying how the known drivers of implementation were used. Using multiple informants, documents and observations at two centers, I produced a report rich in description of how implementation has proceeded, and how it has changed. I spent approximately 12 weeks in the field interviewing participants, reviewing documents, and observing interactions with children in classrooms. The following questions guided the investigation:

1. To what degree is this country's implementation of inclusive education at the early childhood level consistent with effective implementation practices of Fixsen et al. (2008)?
2. Are teachers at pilot centers implementing inclusive education in way that reflects inclusive education principles as identified by UNESCO?

## **Chapter 4: Results**

This study involved collection of qualitative data to assess implementation of inclusive education at the early childhood level in seven early childhood centers in on Caribbean nation. I analyzed data using the implementation framework of Fixsen and colleagues (2005), and inclusive best practices that have emerged from UNESCO (2005, 2009). The framework and knowledge of best practices in inclusive education were used to frame my approach to the investigation, analysis and reporting of findings.

In this chapter I report both the quantitative and qualitative data results. I first describe survey results. These results provided an indication of the implementation climate and participant attitude towards including children with disabilities and special needs. Survey results served to support the qualitative data, which are related to implementation and teacher attitudes. I report the qualitative findings related the implementation of inclusive education using the implementation drivers of Fixsen et al (2008) as predetermined themes. In each section I use the driver components and provide findings from document analysis, interviews with ministry officials, evidence from the survey, my observations and field notes. Following presentation of data to support the predetermined themes I supply the themes and text to support them, which emerged from the data. Before furnishing the results of the observations I provide a brief analysis of the current government's position. I then provide the results of the observations conducted at an early childhood center and conclude with a general summary.

## Survey Results

I describe the results beginning with demographics of survey respondents. This is followed by frequencies of responses to survey statements. I report the findings from the open-ended question in the qualitative section of this chapter along with my deductions about the practice of inclusion.

**Demographics of participants.** As part of the survey, teachers from the seven ECCE centers completed a demographic section, (Table 5). I report demographic information as percentages rounded to the nearest tenth. In total, 18 teachers from seven ECCE centers participated in the survey. Half of the teachers were between 31-40 years in age. In the sample surveyed, 33% of teachers had been teaching between 11 and 15 years. The number of years teaching versus the number of years teaching at the early childhood level did not vary much, a possible result of the small sample size. A large percentage (67%) of teachers were at the ECCE center they were now working at for five or fewer years. All participants held post-secondary or tertiary level degrees with more than half of the teachers reported holding Bachelor's or Master's Degrees. These demographics suggested a highly qualified and experienced group of teachers.

Table 5  
 Characteristics of teachers surveyed (*n*=18)

<b>Demographics</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Age (years)</b>		
21-30	1	5.6
31-40	9	50.0
41-50	7	38.9
51-60	1	5.6
<b>Position at school</b>		
Head Teacher	5	27.8
Teacher	7	38.9
Assistant Teacher	6	33.3
Auxiliary Teacher	0	0.0
<b>Number of years teaching altogether</b>		
0-5	1	5.6
6-10	3	16.7
11-15	6	33.3
16-20	4	22.2
21 and more	4	22.2
<b>Number of years teaching at the early childhood level</b>		
0-5	2	11.1
6-10	5	27.8
11-15	5	27.8
16-20	2	11.1
21 and more	4	22.2
<b>Number of years teaching at this early childhood center</b>		
0-5	12	66.7
6-10	6	33.3
16-20		
21 and more		
<b>Highest Level of Education</b>		
High School		
Teachers College	1	5.6
School of Continuing Studies or SERVOL	5	27.8
Bachelor's Degree	9	50.0
Master's Degree	3	16.7

**Results from the implementation climate survey.** As stated in Chapter Three, implementation climate data provide teachers' perceptions of specific activities related to the implementation of inclusive education practices. On the climate survey, teachers indicated their level of agreement or disagreement with each statement using a five point

Likert scale: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree and two additional items Does Not Exist in Our Organization and Don't Know.

Responses are presented in table 6.

Responding to statements about the MOE, more than half (66.7%) expressed agreement that inclusive education (IE) was compatible with the philosophy of the MoE. In contrast, only 44.4% of respondents agreed that MOE top officials strongly supported the ongoing implementation of IE. A third of the respondents agreed that MOE officials were minimizing obstacles and barriers to IE at ECCE centers. The same percentage agreed the guidelines for implementation were not clear to those who have the implement the policy. These responses suggest that while respondents agree that the MoE philosophy is compatible with inclusive education, top ministry officials are not being effective in implementation of the policy.

The responses related to teachers' competency to implement inclusive education did not indicate a clear pattern. Over half (55.6%) agreed that their professional training was compatible with inclusive education. Conversely, only 11.1% of respondents agreed that they were adequately trained for inclusion of children with special needs and disabilities, and 16.7% agreed that technical training was available. Although there is an indication of inadequate training, a high percentage (55.5%) of teachers agreed that their center was committed to providing IE services, further; there is some agreement (44.5%) that their center set clear and specific goals related to implementing IE. Nevertheless, most of the respondents (72.2%) agreed that many things needed to change at their center if inclusive education were to be implemented.



Statements focused on staff support in the areas of supervision and coaching, feedback and recognition, and ability to express concerns related to implementation did not show any clear direction on agreement or disagreement. This can be said for responses in general and a major factor for this lack of clear direction on agreement is that the sample size is small. Although this is true, these survey results will be used with the qualitative results I report in the next section.

Table 6  
Percentage Responses to Statements on the Implementation Climate Survey (*n*=18)

Statement	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Does not exist in our organization		Don't know		Did not answer	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
1. Implementing inclusive education is compatible with the philosophy of the Ministry of Education as a whole.			3	16.7			10	55.6	2	11.1	1	5.6	2	11.1		
2. Ministry officials made the guidelines for implementing inclusive education clear to teachers who have to implement the policy.	3	16.7	3	16.7	4	22.2	7	38.9			1	5.6				
3. Inclusive education is being implemented at this early childhood care and education center as prescribed by the experts.	1	5.6	8	44.4	2	11.1	6	33.3			1	5.6				
4. Staff expected to implement inclusive education are doing so willingly in carrying out their job duties.	1	5.6	2	11.1	3	16.7	5	27.8	4	22.2	2	11.1	1	5.6		
5. The inclusive education implementation guidelines are being used "to the letter" as prescribed by its developers and trainers.	2	11.1	8	44.4	2	11.1	3	16.7			3	16.7				
6. District or community issues interfered with the implementation of the innovation at this early childhood center.	1	5.6	7	38.9	2	11.1	2	11.1	1	5.6	1	5.6	4	22.2		

Statement	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Does not exist in our organization		Don't know		Did not answer	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
7. The “benefits” that have resulted from implementing inclusive education far exceed the “costs.”			2	11.1			4	22.2	8	44.4					4	22.2
8. Staff is adequately trained to include children with disabilities and special needs at this early childhood center.	4	22.2	12	66.7			2	11.1								
9. Positive consequences occurred at this early childhood center as a result of implementing the inclusive education.			2	11.1	4	22.2	8	44.4			3	16.7			1	5.6
10. All young children with disabilities and special needs now have access to early childhood care and education services.	4	22.2	7	38.9			5	27.8	1	5.6	1	5.6				
11. The teachers at this early childhood center are committed to providing inclusive early childhood education services.	1	5.6	4	22.2	3	16.7	8	44.4	2	11.1						
12. This early childhood centers overall effectiveness has improved as a result of implementing inclusive education.			2	11.1	5	27.8	7	38.9			4	22.2				
13. Children with disabilities and those with special needs are displaying developmental gains as an outcome of inclusive education.					4	22.2	8	44.4	1	5.6	2	11.1	3	16.7		

Statement	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Does not exist in our organization		Don't know		Did not answer	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
14. Staff receives supervision and coaching related to implementing inclusive education on a regular basis.	4	22.2	6	33.3	3	16.7	3	16.7	1	5.6	1	5.6				
15. There is adequate time spent in planning the details of implementing inclusive education in Trinidad and Tobago.	2	11.1	8	44.4	2	11.1	1	5.6	1	5.6			4	22.2		
16. Top administrators from the Ministry of Education strongly support the ongoing implementation of inclusive education.	1	5.6	4	22.2	2	11.1	6	33.3	2	11.1			3	16.7		
17. Staff gets positive feedback and/or recognition for their efforts implementing inclusive education.	3	16.7	3	16.7	2	11.1	6	33.3	1	5.6	2	11.1	1	5.6		
18. Top administrators from the Ministry of Education minimized obstacles and barriers to implementing inclusive education at this early childhood center.	1	5.6	6	33.3	2	11.1	6	33.3			1	5.6	2	11.1		
19. Funding issues interfered with the implementation of inclusive education at this early childhood center.	2	11.1	1	5.6	1	5.6	6	33.3	4	22.2	3	16.7	1	5.6		

Statement	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Does not exist in our organization		Don't know		Did not answer	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
20. Implementing inclusive education involved taking a risk at this early childhood center.			7	38.9	5	27.8	4	22.2	1	5.6	1	5.6				
21. This early childhood center set clear and specific goals related to what?.	2	11.1	2	11.1	3	16.7	7	38.9	1	5.6	2	11.1	1	5.6		
22. Providing inclusive education has been consistent over time at this early childhood center.	2	11.1	6	33.3	3	16.7	6	33.3			1	5.6				
23. Experts in inclusive education have provided training for teachers to implement inclusive education.	3	16.7	4	22.2	2	11.1	7	38.9			1	5.6	1	5.6		
24. There are performance-monitoring systems in place to guide the implementation of inclusive education at this and other early childhood centers.	4	22.2	5	27.8	2	11.1	4	22.2			2	11.1	1	5.6		
25. Training and technical assistance are readily available to staff involved implementing inclusive education.	5	27.8	6	33.3			3	16.7					4	22.2		

Statement	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Does not exist in our organization		Don't know		Did not answer	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
26. Adequate resources have been made available by the Ministry of Education to include children with special needs and disabilities.	5	27.8	8	44.4	1	5.6	2	11.1			1	5.6	1	5.6		
27. The “costs” of inclusive education far exceed any benefits that may occur.	3	16.7	5	27.8	1	5.6	6	33.3					3	16.7		
28. Staff members are encouraged to express concerns that arise in the course of implementing inclusive education.	1	5.6	5	27.8	1	5.6	5	27.8	2	11.1	3	16.7	1	5.6		
29. The implementation of inclusive education is being seen as a regular part of the programming offered to the school community.	1	5.6	5	27.8	2	11.1	9	50			1	5.6	—			
30. Efforts are in the works to see that inclusive education becomes a permanent part of our education system.	1	5.6	1	5.6			8	44.4	2	11.1			6	33.3		
31. It is difficult to attract and/or retain qualified staff needed to include children with disabilities and special needs.			4	22.2	2	11.1	6	33.3	4	22.2			2	11.1		

Statement	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Does not exist in our organization		Don't know		Did not answer	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
32. Based on data available, the inclusive education policy has been effective in enrolling young children with disabilities into early childhood centers.	2	11.1	7	38.9	2	11.1	3	16.7	1	5.6			3	16.7		
33. Many things needed to change at this early childhood center in order for inclusive education to be implemented as prescribed.			5	27.8			8	44.4	5	27.8						
34. The effectiveness of inclusive education is apparent to stakeholders outside this early childhood center.	2	11.1	5	27.8	2	11.1	4	22.2			1	5.6	3	16.7	1	5.6
35. Inclusive education is compatible with the professional training of staff at this early childhood center.	2	11.1	4	22.2	1	5.6	9	50.0	1	5.6	1	5.6				

## **Qualitative Results**

In this section, I report the findings from my analysis of nine interviews and information from documents related to inclusive education policy as well as my field notes. I conducted the interviews with three with former MoE officials, two current officials, one cluster manager, and three teachers at the ECCE center where I did the observations. To protect the identity of participants, I have grouped the former and current MoE officials and use the title MoE decision makers. To present the finding from the documents, interviews, observations, field notes and survey I use the predetermined codes from Fixsen, et al. (2005). After presenting findings related to predetermined codes, I provide the themes, which emerged as I coded the data. Following this, I report on the inclusive practices I observed at the selected pilot center with a general summary of the findings.

The three-implementation drivers of Fixsen, et al. (2005) – competency, organization and leadership – are processes that can be leveraged to improve fidelity when implementing evidence-based practices. In this section I provide the definition of the driver, then specify and define the component to be discussed. I then present evidence from documents, interviews, field notes, survey and observations related to the driver.



**Competency Drivers.** Competency drivers refer to the mechanisms to develop, improve, and sustain one's ability to implement an intervention as intended. There are four components of this driver: staff selection, training, coaching, and performance assessment.

***Staff selection.*** This component refers to the purposeful process of recruiting, interviewing, and hiring personnel who have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to carry out the innovation or display an attitude of being trainable. Documents related to the education reform efforts in Trinidad and Tobago make reference to staff selection for ECCE and the inclusive education (IE) initiative. The report of the Education Development Center, Inc. (2008) states, “the goal of equal access to quality early childhood care and education has triggered a set of regulations and policies that promote teacher quality through higher qualifications for teaching staff and create pay parity for teachers across ECCE and primary levels” (p. 44).

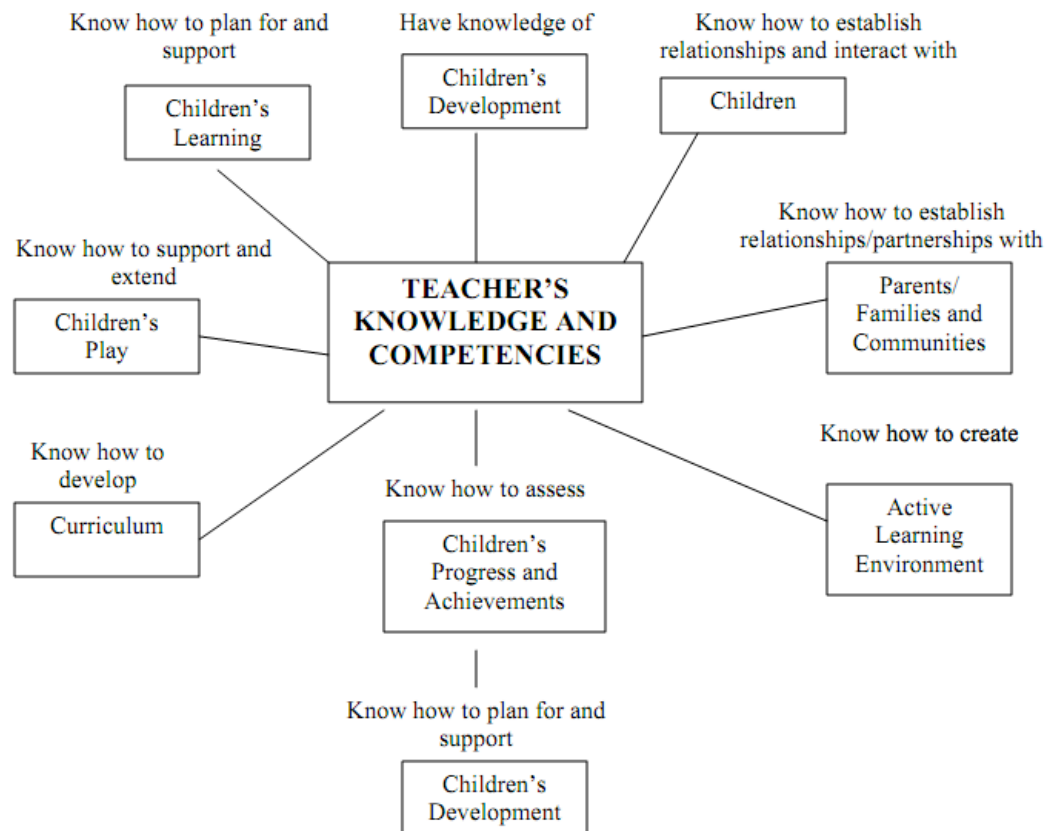
Indeed, this was evident in documents such as the Standards for Regulating Early Childhood Services (2006), one of the several policies created during the period of education reform for the seamless education system. This document stipulates the appropriate competencies and requirements for ECCE personnel. These include among others: child protection issues, equal opportunities, special needs of children, working cooperatively with parents/caregivers, families and the community. The document further specifies the levels of qualifications a person can enter the profession holding. The levels are listed as:

- Auxiliary Assistant: less than three CXC/O Levels and no professional certification

- Early childhood care and education assistant teacher: five CXC's or five O Levels (English, Mathematics, one Science subject, and any other two subjects) and professional certification
- Early childhood care and education teacher: Tertiary certification in ECCE education or Teacher's Diploma and Certificate in Education in ECCE
- Early childhood care and Education Administrator teacher: Bachelor's degree in ECCE or bachelor's degree in education with ECCE specialization and at least 8 years experience.

According to the report of the Education Development Center (2008), schools were to be staffed with one administrator/teacher, two teachers, two teacher assistants, and one auxiliary assistant. Another document, which was created as part of the reform to promote quality Early Childhood Education and Inclusive Education, was the National Early Childhood Care and Education Curriculum Guide (2006). This curriculum guide provides the image shown in figure 6 for the knowledge and competencies an early childhood educator needs.

Figure 6: Knowledge and Competencies an Early Childhood Educator Needs



The documents were specific to the selection of ECCE teachers in general. However, interviews revealed difficulties with finding staff with the level of qualifications stipulated in the Standards for Regulating ECCE services. For instance, one of the comments from a senior MoE decision maker who was interviewed indicated that there were not sufficient numbers of teachers for the number of schools and adjustments in targeted staffing were needed. The adjustment led to centers having an administrator teacher and two or three teacher assistant teachers. While my survey was conducted after the change in government, the staffing pattern observed at the seven pilot centers was similar to what the MoE decision maker stated. According to another MoE decision maker interviewed there were more assistant teachers than teachers placed in

ECCE centers because of the lack of qualified teachers.

In selecting the pilot inclusive ECCE centers, key personnel were integral to the selection process. When asked during the interview about selecting staff for the pilot ECCE inclusive centers, decision makers in both the ECCE Unit and SSS unit of the MoE stated that the staff were already in place since the centers were already operational and therefore existing staff had to assume the responsibilities if a center was selected as a pilot. The ECCE decision maker further stated “we tried to look for schools where the staff will be willing to cooperate, go the extra mile if necessary, spend extra hours with the training and also the changes within the environment.” Both MoE decision makers indicated another dimension to the staff selection process. This was the importance of leadership in selecting a pilot school. As noted by one of the decision makers, the administrator teacher’s support of the vision of inclusive education was a critical component in the selection process.

Two of the three teachers interviewed at the ECCE observation center indicated that they became part of the MoE when their center was taken over by the former government when it assumed responsibilities for community ECCE centers (See Chapter two for a more detailed explanation). The teacher explained how she became employed as an early childhood educator with the Community Council:

What happened is that they had a space ...an opening. They just asked for my passes (grades from courses completed at secondary school) and everything.

They knew I was studying at UWI doing my certificate course [sic in early Childhood Education] and everything. I did a mini interview with the person and

the councilor in charge of the center there and then they just hired me because they had the position.

She went on to explain that when the new government center was erected, “all the staff that was over there, they came across.” The second teacher described a similar experience.

The third teacher had only recently been hired. All three of the teachers were interviewed by the Human Resources Department of the MoE and classified according to their years of service and academic training as a part of the process of the transition of the center; however, they were not required to have previous experience or training in inclusive education.

***Training.*** This component of the competency driver refers to purposeful, skill-based, and adult learning informed by processes designed to support teachers and staff in acquiring the skills and information needed to begin using a new program or innovation. The loan document to the IDB identified the need for training and technical assistance to deal with diverse student needs and the demand for “special needs” services. The loan document stated:

Despite the favorable dispositions of teachers to work with students with special needs, training and expertise to diagnose and address special learning needs remains weak, and specialty occupations, such as school counselors and speech therapists, are in short supply nationwide (pp. 5, 3.2).

There was also provision in the loan for the seamless education project to enhance the knowledge, skills, and capacity of classroom teachers, special education teachers, support services personnel, and administrators to meet the learning needs of all students.

There was also provision for training to be provided to senior managers in an effort to strengthen their management skills to better guide staff through the organizational changes in MoE.

Other documents I reviewed addressed training and working with tertiary level institutions to staff the government ECCE centers being constructed. Interviews with all officials revealed that teachers in the ECCE centers had received training related to IE or special education. The decision maker at the ECCE unit of the MoE indicated that teachers entering early childhood centers were expected to have at least certification in early childhood education from SERVOL or the School of Continuing Studies. This decision maker explained,

...within their degree training, there is a component for special education and special needs. In fact, more than one course, each semester, each year group, in fact, each level, there is a special ed course that we refer to as special education course at various levels. Level 1 will be the simple areas then they move to Level 2 then Level 3.

This information on training was supported by the 50% of survey participants agreeing that IE was compatible with their professional training. The official further explained that there was communication and collaboration between the MoE and other government offices as tertiary institutions structured courses in early childhood care and education.

A decision maker at the SSS unit seemed to express a feeling of inadequacy by stating:

One of the holes in planning was that we didn't consider what had to be done to train enough people to get them in fast enough and so we ended up with a shortage you see. So that was something that was at fault. In a sense what we were doing with training is filling the gaps with programs and trainings on issues that we felt were necessary.

Decision makers from both SSS and the ECCE unit gave the same account of the training in their interviews. They all explained that technical assistance was secured from a foreign consultant, Dr. Patricia Morgan, and that she provided training for three consecutive weeks; during the school's July to August vacation period, over a two-year period. A decision maker in the SSS unit recounted that week one of training focused on the philosophy and history of inclusive education. Week two focused on assessment and screening practices and week three on strategies for use in a regular education environment. The training, the officer explained, was very interactive; participants used role-playing, drama, and completed group assignments in addition to typical lectures. To encourage attendance and full participation, certificates of various levels were awarded at the end of the training.

I probed the decision maker further with my questioning to find out if all teachers at pilot inclusive centers took part in the training program. The decision maker stated that the training was not mandatory but open to all teachers at the early childhood and primary level. Approximately 50% of those attending were from early childhood centers. I probed further to discover if the attendance data would indicate the number of

participants from pilot early childhood centers. The decision maker explained that while data were collected on attendance, there was no collating of the information and retrieving the records would be a difficult task.

My interview with the head teacher and assistant teacher who were at the observed center before operation was taken over from the community counsel, confirmed the information provided by the ECCE decision maker about courses received during their certification and bachelor's degree programs. The head teacher, who has a bachelor's degree, recalled "we did a lot of case studies where you'll find a child may be displaying public behavior problems or learning disabilities and you have to come up with solutions and ways to deal with the child in a specific way." She was quick to indicate, however, that there was nothing particularly specific about the training that would enable her to include a child with special needs in the center. The SERVOL-trained assistant teacher recalled doing case studies and a project where she was required to interview a parent of a child who had a special need or disability.

When interviewed about the training received to be able to accommodate children with special needs, all three of the teachers at the observation center indicated they were not a part of the training offered by the SSS unit. I asked each teacher if she was aware of the training that was offered. The head teacher and assistant teacher who had been at the center for some time both indicated that they were aware but it was not mandatory; additionally, they both expressed that the training was not being conducted in a place that was easily accessible. Further, they were not going to be compensated or reimbursed for the cost of travel. The third teacher was at the center for three months and not aware of the training offered.



***Coaching.*** This component refers to the regular, embedded professional development, designed to help teachers and staff use the program or innovation as intended. The loan document for the seamless education program indicated a need to design and implement an induction program using a mentor model for new teachers. During my interviews administrators and teachers used the term “supervision” when responding to my questions about coaching. Because of the jargon used locally I decided to include mentoring and supervision within my definition of coaching. A decision maker in the SSS unit expressed during the interview,

...the idea was to provide support for the teachers as they went into the classroom. This is why we thought of having one administrator per center instead of one per cluster of centers. One administrator per center would allow the person to supervise.

Decision makers in the ECCE unit corroborated this information indicating that the MOE was moving towards having administrators trained in clinical supervision as opposed to just monitoring and encouraging collaboration and planning with staff.

The head teacher at the observation site when interviewed indicated that the cluster manager supervises teachers at the center. I probed to find out if she did any mentoring or supervision. The head teacher responded emphatically that she was not about to tell anyone anything about his or her teaching, “that’s for the cluster manager to do.” The other two teachers, however, indicated that the head teacher supervises and reports to the cluster manager. They all explained that when the cluster manager visited she would go over lesson plans and ask about problems experienced. Often, she would then develop a workshop based on the problems. During my period of observation the

cluster manager held a workshop with staff related to professionalism and appropriateness of attire for the work place. When interviewed I asked the cluster manager why that topic was selected, she indicated that staff members were from the community and friends with many parents. She wanted to remind teachers of their professional responsibilities.

Teachers further explained that before the new administration came into power, they would have the following officers coming to the center: a curriculum specialist who checked on the implementation of the curriculum and gave suggestions; a quality assurance person who would check the books, records, and other documents; a community liaison who would come in and interact with persons in the community. These officers, they explained, provided support and guidance. Teachers' response on the survey showed no clear distinction in agreement or disagreement with the statement about supervision and coaching.

***Performance assessment.*** This component refers to the procedures and processes for measuring the degree to which teachers practiced the intervention or instructional practices as intended. The loan document submitted by the previous government requested funding for:

- (i) the development of a Performance Management and Appraisal System for teachers; (ii) professional development for in-service teachers to improve teaching performance; and (iii) the establishment of a National Council for Teaching and Teacher Education, responsible for the definition of standards for the teaching profession.

In addition, the authors proposed a baseline survey of teacher performance before

implementing MOE's Performance Management and Appraisal Process (PMAP) for all teachers.

The government decision maker interviewed indicated that while a very good system for assessment of teachers and all public servants was developed, "It doesn't work. It doesn't work because we don't have all the rest of the system in place to make it work." According to this official, the supervision load on one person made them so busy with administrative work it was difficult to get into the classroom to assess what is happening so as to give appropriate feedback. This lack of staffing was echoed by a SSS unit decision maker who, when asked about the process of assessing if persons were actually implementing inclusive education, the response was, "there is no assessment!" It was further explained that while funding was procured for this type of ongoing assessment, the unit did not have the human capacity for ongoing monitoring and evaluation. However, the ECCE decision maker I interviewed, indicated "the ECCE officers were prepared and had already been doing assessments and appraisals of staff at all early childhood centers particularly with regard to children in need and those with special needs." These officers however did not participate in the inclusive education training.

At the observed center, the new teacher had not had a performance appraisal. The other two teachers indicated they received performance appraisal packets, which they filled out and returned to the cluster manager. Probing further about what happened to the assessment and how the assessment affected their job, both teachers had no knowledge. One teacher lamented, "We are always filling out forms and no one knows what happens to them. Those we do for the children just get placed in the cupboards." I

asked the teachers if they had any indication whether their teaching practices conformed to the requirements of the MoE. The head teacher indicated, “I’m not sure if I am doing what is required of me... But just based on the experience I have, I try my best to do what I could do.”

**Organization Driver.** The organization driver refers to mechanisms to create and sustain hospitable organizational and system environments for effective services. The components of this driver are systems intervention, facilitative administration, and decision support data systems. I report the findings for each component in the order presented above.

***Systems intervention.*** This component is focused on the external variables, policies, environments, systems or structures that influence or have impact on an implementing organization. The reports I reviewed identified the World Conference on Education for All (EFA) (1990) and the Dakar Framework for Action (2000) as the impetus for education reform in Trinidad and Tobago. In addition to these international policies, the regional education project for Latin America and the Caribbean (PRELAC) and the Caribbean Plan of Action to identify and support the development of “the ideal Caribbean person” spurred an urgent need for education reform.

The former government, as part of its systematic intervention, applied to the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) administrator of the Japan Special Fund for a loan in the sum of U.S. 630,000 dollars to fund the seamless education system project. The previous government added U.S. \$150,000 to this external support, bringing the total cost of the program to U.S. \$780,000. Funds were used to contract consultants to carry out diagnostic assessments of the three components of the seamless education project and

provide recommendations, designs, and implementation plans. The three components are: 1 – Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE); 2 – Inclusive Education, and 3 – Sector Management & Project Execution. The assessments, recommendations, designs and implementation plans related to these three components informed education reform and the implementation of inclusive education (Seamless Education Project Loan Document).

The government systematically intervened to reform the education system by creating a seamless education system. Experts identified quality early childhood care and education as the linchpin for school readiness. The Franklin Report (2010) noted that this goal would be achieved through the alignment of the curriculum at the early childhood level with what is required at the primary level, “reducing the barriers to access ... restructuring of the learning infrastructures, ... through the provision of appropriate learning resources, targeted and ongoing professional development and the rationalization of staffing patterns” (p. 7). The report further identifies the principles of inclusiveness and equity as guides to the implementation process aimed at reducing disparities and/or barriers to accessing early learning environments with success.

My interview with decision makers in the SSS unit indicated that much of the inclusive education policy was created to affect the whole education system of Trinidad and Tobago and was modeled after the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of the U.S. According to one SSS decision maker:

We reviewed what was done in the (U.S.) policy and the law and we felt they were appropriate, we didn’t see it necessary to reinvent the wheel, for want of a better term. We felt that it (IDEA) clearly distinguished requirements and not

only gave the label but gave a nice, clear explanation and we felt that it was appropriate.

Another SSS decision maker explained that it made sense to use the U.S. legislation and regulations as a guide due to the proximity of both countries, physically and electronically. According to this decision maker during the interview,

We are five hours away from United States and one second away electronically.

So in essence it's not why did you choose the people who form our special education department were all trained in either US or England. I believe the majority were trained in England using the Sheffield process and gaining their masters degrees. Then others with less than Master's degrees were all trained by locals and some of them did some training in the US as well. That influence will bring the US influence into the system. We use the manuals, information that would come out of that system. The people who do diagnoses in the country are US trained. So they are not going to use anything else but the US categorization.

The references to US education policy were also reflected in response to the open-end question at the end of the survey. As an example one respondent wrote, "The law says no child left behind."

***Facilitative administration.*** This component focuses on the internal processes, policies, regulations, and structures over which a school or district implementing an innovation has some control. After reviewing all my data tags I found that no specific document referred to this component. Although, according the loan proposal, the focus of the seamless education reform included decentralization of management; mechanisms that would facilitate the process were not outlined in the loan document or in the

inclusive education policy.

The head teacher interpreted facilitative administration commenting on what the new government did to prepare the center for the new program. She stated new government sent workmen to do light repairs at the center one day. The lighting fixtures were repaired, areas where the flooring was raised were repaired, and a leak in the roof addressed. She further explained that later a MoE team visited and informed the staff that an area needed to be cleared for use by the person who would be conducting interventions. The media and library section were rearranged. The new administrators brought in furniture, had a meeting with parents to gain consent to assess children's cognitive processing, and, by the following week, assessments were started.

***Decision support data system.*** This refers to having a system for identifying, collecting, and analyzing data that are useful to the teacher, school, district, and others in the implementing environment. Across all documents reviewed and interviews conducted, I found no segments of text indicating a system was in place for decision support data systems. One decision maker from the MOE indicated the decision to focus on inclusive education at the ECCE level was as a result of the data reported from the Miske -Witt study, which identified that many children entering the primary level school were not ready and exhibited spectrum of delays which could be addressed at the ECCE level (see chapter 2 for more detail).

At the SSS unit, the decision maker indicated that data were used for staffing requests based on the number of referrals to the SSS unit, "as we service the children out there and we get a sense of the numbers by referrals, by requests for concessions on an annual basis we are looking at that data. That is the data that is used to make our

recommendations for staffing.” I followed up by asking about the number of children in various age groups referred, types of referral, and districts with the highest percentage of referrals. The SSS decision maker indicated referrals were categorized by district for staffing purposes but the reason for the referral and age groups were not categorized. The ECCE decision maker indicated that socioeconomic data, such as household income, number of persons in the household, were collected mainly to identify cases where the social welfare department may become involved to support a child with special needs and his or her family. The other ECCE decision maker interviewed indicated, “we collect a great deal of data for example regularity and punctuality. In addition administrators submit a monthly report about everything that is happening at the center.” As I probed further about how the data is used the officer shared, “those reports are filed here in the office so we have a record of what is happening in the field.”

When asked about data collected at the ECCE center, the teachers referred to application forms, children’s progress reports, and lesson plans. I asked the head teacher how this information was used; the teacher indicated the documents were filed in the office so that supervisors and field officers could access them if needed. The assistant teacher who had been working at the center for some time indicated the facilitators under the old government would just look to see if they were collecting data. I asked all teachers how they used the data collected they all reported that parents received a copy of progress reports and other documents were placed in the cupboards as evidence of data collection.

**Leadership Driver.** This driver focuses on providing the right leadership strategies for the types of leadership challenges. These leadership challenges often



emerge as part of the change management process needed to make decisions, provide guidance, and support organization functioning. The components of this driver are technical challenges and adaptive challenges. I report on each in turn.

***Technical challenges.*** These are those challenges characterized by clear agreement on a definition of the dimensions of the problem at hand. Technical leadership is effective when there is agreement about the nature and scope of the challenge and consensus on the course of action to address the challenge. The Franklyn report acknowledged a challenge related to leadership specifying that, “at the outset, it must be emphasized that the building of a team leadership culture within the ECCE Division is critical to the success of this initiative” (2010, p. 5). The report further stated that co-determination through effective collaboration among key stakeholders will assist in the creation of mutual agreed upon plans, which are therefore more likely to be implemented. In such an operational climate, effective leadership, transparency, and compromise replace dysfunctional relationships.

Many decision makers and supervisors spoke of the role played by the Minister of Education in the old regime and her method of addressing the disconnect between various divisions of the MOE. One MOE decision maker recounted a challenge in putting all the segments of the seamless education system together. To achieve the objective, the former Minister “created the interdivisional teams (all the different divisions of the Ministry) it was a big headache ... downside of it was people getting into your business and so there was that resistance initially.” The MOE decision maker continued to explain that while there was resistance and it was annoying, in the end there were a lot of benefits. The former minister persisted with these meetings until everybody started to

understand what was happening at other divisions and could make critical and constructive input related to creating the seamless education project focused on inclusive education and early childhood education. Another benefit noted by the MOE decision maker was that officials began to know each other as people and real connections and relationships were made across the divisions of the MOE, which seemed for awhile to cut down on some of the bureaucracy and balkanization.

***Adaptive challenges.*** This component refers to those leadership challenges that are not “solved” through traditional management approaches, because adaptive challenges involve legitimate, yet competing, perspectives — different views of the problem and different perspectives on what might constitute a viable solution. The documents I reviewed did not address adaptive challenges, as they are often not predicted. These types of challenges were identified through interviews, my field notes and observation. Each person interviewed commented on the impact of the change in government. This quote from a decision maker in the MOE captures part of the challenge faced:

The government changed and we had a minister coming in with a different concept of inclusivity partly because his advisor, ... is an accountant deeply involved in a charitable homes for children. He (the advisor) has had some firsthand knowledge and interaction of children with more emotional and behavioral needs. He had some ideas on how inclusivity should be dealt with. For a while we were sort of at a standstill because his ideas while not incompatible, could not be the only way that we approached inclusivity.

In commenting on another change made by the new government, the MOE decision maker referred to the cluster system, which the new government implemented. A cluster manager supervised three to four ECCE centers in a district. The decision maker explained that the cluster arrangement had been tried on at least three prior occasions without success because the human resource burden on one individual was too large and caused many issues to slip by or just not be addressed. The new government still put it in place.

All three teachers who were interviewed commented on challenges with getting vacation time since the new government took office. The head teacher captured it this way:

Our contracts say we have 20 days vacation and then like they (new government) just wake up and say we are not supposed to have 20 days. We are supposed to have 15 days. So the administrator is not supposed to give their staff more than 15 days vacation, even though our contract states 20 days.

My field notes suggest that these adaptive challenges were irreconcilable and may have resulted in the mass retirement and resignation of officers from the SSS unit and ECCE unit.

### **The Current ECCE Situation**

Before presenting the observation findings I describe information related to the new government plan. Of all the persons I interviewed this decision maker in the MOE was the only one who shared information about the new initiative. The decision maker explained during the interview that the inclusive education project had already gone through the first two phases of implementation and was entering the third phase when the

government changed. The decision maker further explained that new administration decided to take a different direction in regard to the seamless education and addressing children with special needs. According to this decision maker, “I can’t say that it (the new plan) has thrown the whole concept of inclusion off. It has taken a different approach, has been re-conceptualized.”

The re-conceptualized plan according to this informant is called Children Understanding, and is being administered through consultants from the National Association for Child Development (NACD) working along with a local company International Children’s Academy for Neurological Development (ICAN). The consultants screened all the children in the pilot schools. The screening was done manually and uses neurodevelopmental approach to cognitive processing. There are three different levels of intervention based on the results of the screenings.

The intervention uses the Smarter Kids Memory game from the Simply Smarter Project. The game is an application designed for iPads and iPhones. On the website of the app development and software company that created Simply Smarter Kids-Memory I found the follow promotional text,

Simply Smarter Kids-Memory is a fun, addicting game that can improve your memory! Ranked in the top Educational apps since its release!

- Kids intuitively know how to use the app.
- No parental supervision required.
- Positive reinforcement throughout.
- Fun and challenging.

- The more you use it, the better you'll do.

<http://www.asci.us/simplysmarterter.html>

On the website I also noted that for each purchase of the app 50% is donated to the National Association for Child Development (NACD), which is the company contracted as consultants by the new government.

The game has the following options classic (auditory/visual), auditory only, and visual only. Children can choose common objects, animals, colors, numbers, letters or household items as categories. As an example with the selections; common objects and auditory only an image similar to that in figure 7 can appear without the objects at the bottom. The app flashes blue in the first square saying the name of an object, then the second saying the name of another object and the same for the third. Four images then appear below the squares. The first square flashes and the child drag an image into the flashing square using a stylus or finger. If all the images are placed into the correct boxes the child receive applause and the image in figure 8 appears.

Figure 7: Simply Smarter Kids Screen Capture 1



Figure 8: Simply Smarter Kids Screen Capture 2



My field notes after conversation with a young man who visited the center to collect some documents from the lady administering the interventions confirmed the information provided by the decision make in the MoE. He chatted with me about the screening process indicating it was manual with benchmarks from 1 to 7. When asked the name of the assessment tool he indicated the team coordinator developed it. He also share that children's neurological processing should be appropriate for their age in that a one year old child could only process one bit of information. He explained neurological processing to be the ability to take in data and bring it back out appropriately. Further he shared that between one and seven years of age a person could only process as much information as determined by their chronological age. A one-year-old child can only process one bit of information at a time. A two-year-old two bits and so on at age seven processing plateaus, the average adult being able to only process seven pieces of data. I

asked him over and over for the source of this information, which I record in my notes to seem scripted.

Seeking to get more information about the plan and approach of the new government related to project 'Children Understanding,' I made an unscheduled visit to the advisor to the minister of education, whose office is located within the suite of offices occupied by the minister. I shared my research interest and requested to conduct an interview with him at a convenient time. He asked for formal letter of request, indicating the minister would have to grant him permission to be interviewed. I had a letter prepared and produced it immediately.

The advisor took the letter, read it and told me to come back in two weeks, at which time he would be able to give an answer about being interviewed. Indicating my telephone number was in the letter, I asked if he would call. He agreed. I also asked for his contact information, which he provided. I attempted to establish a day and time for the next contact, the advisor to the minister remained vague, so I suggested a day and time two weeks later to hear back. On the agreed day I attempted to contact the advisor by phone. I called early in the morning, again just after 1pm and then at 4:15pm; the administrative assistant repeatedly indicated he was not available ending the phone call without asking to take a message. Two days later I visited the ministry and again gained access to the office of minister of education. While walking in to the office I meet the advisor, who said "Minister does not want anyone talking about this project right now so I can not talk with you." I asked if I could have that response in writing, the request was not granted. What I report above and the observations in the classroom with the

interventionist reported in the next section represent what I was able to find out about the program.

### **Classroom Observations**

A final part of my study involved observing teacher-child interactions, how children interacted among each other, teaching strategies, learning activities, use of materials, use of space, and grouping size. I did observations at the center that had been operating as a pilot intervention center for the longest period of time. I conducted observations from 8:30 am to 2:00 pm Monday through Friday over a two-week period. I observed morning assembly, one group activity in the morning, and another group activity in the afternoon, outdoor and indoor play, and interactions with the interventionist. These activities lasted between 15 and 30 minutes. Table 7 shows the center schedule.



Table 7

Daily Schedule	
Time	Activity
8:00 – 8:30	Teacher arrival and preparation
8:30 – 9:00	Arrival of children – Free Play
9:00 – 9:15	Circle Time
9:15 – 9:30	Circle Time – Literacy and Numeracy focus
9:30 – 9:45	Small Group Activities (groups based on age)
9:45 – 10:00	Clean-up and Prayer
10:00 – 10:30	Fruit Snacks
10:30 – 11:45	Outdoor Play
10:45 – 11:00	Cool Down (story time/poetry time/listening to music)
11:05 – 11:45	Center-Based Learning (one structured activity and one free choice activity)
11:45 – 12:00	Recall of the day's activities/Wash-up for lunch
12:00 – 12:30	Lunch time
12:30 – 12:45	Outdoor play
12:45 – 1:00	Cool Down (story time/poetry time/listening to music)
1:00 – 1:30	Nap time
1:30 – 1:45	Music and Movement
1:45 – 2:00	Dismissal
2:00 – 3:00	Teachers clean up and prepare for next day.

**Description of ECCE Center.** This early childhood center is located in the suburbs of the nation's capital. As a pilot ECCE center, it is located in close proximity to a primary school, as were all of the other pilot centers. This facility was built before the inclusive efforts were begun and was retrofitted to accommodate children with disabilities. The retrofitting included installation of bars in the children's shower and toilet, and the construction of a wheelchair ramp at the entrance to the school and another that leads from the back of the center to the back entrance to the primary school. This ECCE center, like all others, has an open floor plan, with low shelves creating activity centers; Figure 9 is an example of the interior of an ECCE center. Activity centers at this center included dress up and home corner which were very diverse in the selection of clothing and house old items. The selection was representative of many of the cultures in Trinidad and Tobago. In the home center there was a mini tawa (baking sheet used on the stove top to make roti), a small mortar and pestle (used in African culture to pound plantains, corn, cassava and the like). The clothes in the dress up area was also very diverse with dashiki, various pieces of kente cloth, sari, dhoti, Chinese dresses along with career uniforms (nurse, fireman, policeman a lab coat). The science corner was not easily accessible however there were scales, different types of measuring cups, weights, smell boxes. Other centers included a library, a media corner, puzzles, blocks and manipulative center. Outside there was a sand and water play area, and a large chest with balls of various sizes, hoops, cricket bats, and other outdoor play items.

At all the ECCE centers children were grouped according to age and worked in a designated area of the open center space seated at desks and chairs for small group

activities; Figure 10 is an example of what the small groups look like. Neither figure 9 nor figure 10 is from the center I observed, in order to maintain anonymity.

According to the head teacher at the center, the cluster manager informed them one day that the school was selected as part of the ICAN project that the new government was initiating. In order to accommodate the ICAN personnel when conducting interventions, the media area was rearranged to accommodate the desks, chairs and equipment required by the interventionist.

Figure 9: Center Layout



Figure 10: Small Group Area



**Staffing and Enrollment.** As noted in an earlier section, there are three teachers at this center. Table 8 provides demographic information about the teachers. All three carry out similar duties during the day. The head teacher is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the center and reports to the cluster administrator. The cluster administrator has two other schools in her portfolio and attempts to visit the center at least once per week. The other persons at the center were a custodian, an officer from a private security firm, and the ICAN interventionist. The interventionist holds a certification in information technology and provides intervention for 20 children at the center who were evaluated as needing intervention. The intervention uses the Smarter Kids Memory game from the Simply Smarter Project.

Table 8  
Teacher demographics at the observation center

Teacher	Qualifications	Number of Years teaching	Number of Years at the Center	Age grouping	Number of children in group
Head Teacher	Bachelor Degree in ECCE	12	12	4- 5	11
Assistant Teacher 1	SERVOL Certification	12	12	4 -5	12
Assistant teacher 2	Five O Levels and first level certificate in Psychology	5 months	5 months	3-4	17

At the time of the study there were a total of 40 children enrolled at the center: 19 boys and 21 girls. The uniform for the center is a different color T-shirt for each day of the school week, boys wore gray shorts, girls gray skorts, and all of the children wore socks and closed toe shoes. All children enrolled at the center came from within a one-mile radius of the school. The ICAN team, under what a decision maker from SSS referred to as a reconceptualization of the inclusive education plan, tested all of the children at the ECCE center. Although I was at the school for two weeks, neither the head teacher nor the cluster manger could locate the list of children whose test results indicated a need for intervention and the level of intervention needed. The cluster manager informed me that parents of children who were tested by the ICAN team did not receive notification of the test results, nor did parents give approval for their children to receive interventions.

There were no children enrolled at the center with documented disabilities. I selected two children, John and Sonia, from five children identified as having possible special needs. John and Sonia were selected because they are in the same group, 3+ years old, which facilitated focused observation. I took particular note of their interactions with the teachers, how they interacted with others, and modifications or adaptations made for them. Both children were also receiving intervention as initiated by the new government. I also observed as they received their Simply Smarter Kids Memory interventions. While a list was not provided I noted them receiving interventions so I observed what happened during those periods.

During the two weeks at the center I observed morning assembly, small group activity in the morning, structured center-based learning, free choice activity, and interactions with the interventionist. To paint a picture of what occurred in the center with this group of children and the two children of interest, I report observations for circle time, followed by structured center-based activity, after which a free choice activity, and end with intervention observations.

**Circle time.** Over the two weeks of observations I noted that a one of the three teachers took responsibility for circle time each week. While that teacher or assistant teacher took the lead the other two sat behind the group to provide supervision. At about 9:00 am the teacher or one of the assistant teachers responsible for circle time began to call the children together. "Circle time, come on over, it is circle time. Pack up what you are doing and come over." Children would leave what they were doing, walk, skip or run over to the circle time area, and sit cross-legged, facing the circle area. Other teachers might call children back to pack up apparatus they had been using.

Children sat in no particular order on a rug in front of the circle time area. The other two teachers sat on chairs behind the group. Circle time began with singing a hello song. This would be followed by the days of the week. The days were on a colorful, commercially-made chart, beginning with Sunday and ending with Saturday.

The teacher would point to the days on the chart using a ruler as the children sang. The teacher would then pause and ask the children, “What day is it today?” In concert the children would respond, most indicating the correct day. The teacher would then ask, for example, “How do we know it’s Tuesday?” On the first two days of observing circle time, I noted the children saying it was Tuesday because it’s yellow day referring to their T-shirt. The teacher would indicate that they were correct and move on to another segment of circle time.

Using commercial flashcards of Monday through Friday, the teacher then placed the cards in random order on the windowsill in front of the affixed days of the week chart. She then invited a child at to come up and select the correct day to place into the missing part of a sentence reading, ‘Today is \_\_\_\_\_.’ In selecting children for the task, teachers would wonder out loud, “Who should I pick to come and finish the sentence?” And commented that, “I am only going to call children who are sitting nicely.” Children would wave their hands above their heads, urging the teacher to pick them. When the child was called upon, she/he would come forward and choose a card. If it was the correct card, the teacher assisted the child in affixing it to the sentence.

If the child was not correct, the children in the group would respond, “No, that’s wrong.” The teachers were observed to a) ask the child to look again and select the correct day, b) invite another child to come and assist, or c) identify the first letter in the



day and ask the child and group to make the sound of the letter. The teacher then prompted the child to find the day that started with the particular sound for that day. It is worth noting that only the head teacher implemented option c) when she did circle time.

The children would then read the sentence as a group. Sonia and John always took an active part in the activity. John would raise his hand to answer, but did not wave frantically like the other children. On three of the 10 occasions the activity was observed, when called upon he selected the correct card.

Sonia in contrast scooted about from place to place during circle time, attending only for short periods of time. She sang the days of the week and took part in the “hello, good morning” song. During the activity to find the day of the week, she chose any card, randomly. One Friday morning during circle, Sonia was more active than usual; the head teacher was responsible for the activity that day. She called on Sonia, who grabbed at the first card and identified it as Friday. The head teacher asked everyone else to be quiet and asked Sonia to identify the first letter in the word. While she fidgeted, Sonia said “W”; the day she had selected was Wednesday.

The head teacher again reminded the group to keep quiet. “If you think you may say the answer,” she told them “hold your lips with your fingers; I only want Sonia to answer because she has not been paying attention.” Some children held their lips. The teacher continued with Sonia, asking her to identify the first sound in “Friday.” Sonia repeated the word “Friday,” and the teacher asked what letter makes the /f/ sound. Sonia did not reply but reached for the Friday flash card and placed it into the sentence strip.

On the second occasion that I observed the day being identified by the color of the children’s T-shirt, I asked the teacher about the lesson. The teacher, who was new, said

that that was what she had observed, so that's what she does. I raised the issue with the head teacher, whom I had taught during her certificate in ECCE program, asking the goal of learning the days of the week. The head teacher after a pause stated, word recognitions, sequencing, and passage of time. I asked about the color and relevance of the color to the learning the days of the week. After some laughter, she indicated that the activities began as a method to help children remind their parents of the color T-shirt for the day. The practice, however, had become ensconced incorrectly into the daily routine.

The following day, two more sentences were added to the days of the week chart:

Yesterday was \_\_\_\_\_.

Today is \_\_\_\_\_.

Tomorrow will be \_\_\_\_\_.

**Small Group Activity.** In general, during the small group activities children assembled around the tables in designated group areas. As they sat waiting, the group teacher told children what they were going to be doing and distributed materials to each child. After all materials were distributed, the teacher then modeled step-by-step what children were to do. For example, during a pre-writing activity children were provided with strips of kite paper and were asked to make a collage of the first letter of their name. The instructions were to first roll the paper and then dip it into individual pots of glue and stick it on to the letter. Children received a sheet of paper with their name written on the top and the first letter of their name printed on the sheet. The teacher then modeled the activity, rolling a piece of kite paper and sticking it onto the sheet. I asked the teacher about the objective of the activity, and she indicated it was both a pre-writing activity and also to help children in identifying their name.

John participated in the activity; however, no modification was made to assist with his fine motor challenges. He stuck the kite paper onto the letter without rolling it. The teacher came over and assisted John with the activity by rolling the paper and sticking it onto the letter outline. Sonia appeared to enjoy the activity. She crumpled wads of paper together and stuck them onto the sheet, without regard for the letter drawn on it.

**Center-Based Learning.** During center-based learning, teachers had three structured center activities; when those were filled, children chose any other activity center and occupied themselves there with the apparatus. Children could choose the puzzle center, blocks center, library or any center that was open.

Teachers used a clothespin with the center name and attached these pins to the student's clothing. I initially thought the clothespins were to keep track of how often a child visited a center and the average utilization of each center. However, it appeared that teachers used the pins to redirect children if they were not at their center of choice.

The structured activity repeated for the week, so that all children were able to benefit. Over the course of one week, the activity at one structured center was making a cake. Children sat and were told about what they were going to do. A cake box mix was used for the activity. The teacher held up the box and pointed to the ingredients, and children named each of them in concert. I did not observe attempts to have John more involved in the activity or to ensure that he was responding. When called, John did as he was asked. The teacher gave him the measuring cup with oil, and he poured it into the dry ingredients. Children were called in turn to complete part of the cake-making process.

Sonia did this activity three times during the week it was offered. Each time her behavior, and the teacher's response, was the same. Sonia would move from where she was first sitting to stand next to the teacher. She reached for several ingredients, and the teacher took a chair from a nearby center to let Sonia sit next to her. The behavior continued. The teacher's attention was on Sonia often, asking her to stop and attempting to move materials from her reach. Sonia took an active part in the whole process as she "assisted" everyone as they were called to have a turn at doing something to make the cake.

During the free choice activity, John often sat at the center he chose where he would engage with the materials, but not with other children. He often selected the library corner. He would flip through a book, replace it, select another, and go through the same process. Sonia moved from center to center. She engaged with children who were busy working, aggressively taking items or rearranging what the children were doing. Children would protest and push her away or call out to a teacher that she was destroying their work. I did not observe Sonia on any day actively engaged for more than two or three minutes in any activity. Teachers were not observed to be intervening to encourage Sonia's intentional and/or appropriate use of materials in the centers. From their structured activity areas, teacher would speak loudly, asking children to lower their voices when play became loud.

**Interventions.** I observed John and Sonia interacting with the interventionist. This person provides the service the new government administration has implemented. The intervention is focused on improving neurological processing. Children were pulled out during any of the following activities: Small Group Activities; Clean up and Prayer;

Cool Down; Center-Based Learning; Recall of the Day's Activities/Wash Up for Lunch; Music and Movement; or, if a child was observed not sleeping, during nap time.

An iPad was used for this activity, with the App for the Simply Smarter Kids Memory game. Children were touched during an activity and invited by the interventionist to "come play with the iPad." The child was escorted to the media room, which was rearranged to facilitate the intervention. Children who were more technologically savvy turned the iPad on and tapped the Smarter Kids App. They then proceeded to go through the activities.

When Sonia was taken to the space to work, she barely sat still enough to complete any task. On one occasion, the interventionist attempted to hold her hands down, but she was unable to get Sonia to engage. Toward the end of my observations, I noted that Sonia was sitting at the table for the intervention for a longer period but still did not interact with the iPad in an appropriate manner. I have no record of Sonia doing any of the iPad activities over the time I observed. Sonia had interventions three times while I was at the center. On all three occasions, her behavior was such that the iPad was never opened.

When John was removed from an activity for intervention, he sat attentively, attending for short periods, and did as he was asked. On the first two occasions observed, he responded to visual prompts. Two visual prompts came up in order, then vanished. Then three prompts reappeared at the bottom of the screen, and two boxes at the top. In this activity he was required to recall the prompts and drag them with his finger to the correct box.

On the second observation he was required to sequence objects. Again he sat quietly and did as he was told. On the third observation the activity required him to listen to the prompts and then place the pictures in the relevant square. He leaned forward into the iPad several times. He was not as successful with auditory prompts and putting them into the required space. The interventionist congratulated his successes and encouraged him to move on to the next activity. John appeared to lose interest in this particular activity very quickly. He became agitated when the interventionist attempted to insist that he try another.

### **Summary**

The results of the efforts to implement inclusive education at the early childhood level indicate that the former government addressed several components of the implementation framework, both during the installation and initial stages of implementation of the program. The actions of the former government during the initial stages of implementation were reported to affect the organization of the MoE by systemic interventions, which included the loan procured from the IDB, several consultations of capacity, creation of the inclusive education policy, and improving physical facilities at ECCE centers which would serve as pilots for the inclusive education initiative.

The former government additionally addressed competency among the early childhood staff by providing training with the intention to implement coaching. Technical leadership was apparent under the old MoE. There appeared to be insurmountable adaptive leadership challenges when the new government took over. I was not able to determine the extent to which the new Minister of Education or any members of the ministry who are key personnel are addressing the drivers, because when

approached they indicated that they were not allowed to share any information about their plan, under their directions from the new Minister of Education.

Observations at the center indicated that the environment was child-friendly, and the center space easy to navigate. The activities observed did not reflect the project approach, nor were they child-centered as suggested in the National Curriculum Guide and UNESCO. Activities were not modified for students suspected of having a special need. Teachers, however, intervened to ensure the children were successfully accessing the learning materials. The two students focused on nevertheless interacted well with teachers and were successful with their classroom activities. They did not appear to have the same level of success with the interventions, however.

In the next chapter I use the findings presented here to answer my research questions: 1) To what degree is this country's implementation of inclusive education at the early childhood level consistent with effective implementation practices of Fixsen et al (2008; and 2) Are teachers at pilot centers implementing inclusive education in ways that reflect inclusive education principles, as identified by UNESCO? I then discuss the implications and limitations of the study and propose future research.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

In this study, I investigated the process of implementing an innovation. Although inclusive education is not a new reform effort in the U.S., its implementation in Trinidad and Tobago is a recent occurrence. My study used the implementation framework of Fixsen et al. (2005) to assess the process of implementing inclusive education at the early childhood level in Trinidad and Tobago. A secondary purpose was to describe how children with special needs and disabilities were being included in early childhood centers in Trinidad and Tobago. After a review of other studies that explored different facets of inclusive education policy implementation in other developing countries, I developed the following research questions:

1. To what degree is the process of implementing inclusive education at the early childhood level in Trinidad and Tobago consistent with effective implementation practices as espoused by Fixsen et al. (2008)?
2. Are teachers at pilot centers implementing inclusive education in a way that reflects inclusive education principles as identified by UNESCO?

In the previous chapter, I presented results from various data collection methods. In this chapter I answer the research questions, then discuss the findings, the limitations of the study, offer some implications of the results, and make recommendations for future research.

### **Research Question One: Effective Implementation Practices**

The findings of my study indicate that on official policies documents the former government utilized all three of Fixsen et al.'s (2008) drivers, competency, organization,



and leadership and most of their respective components. With respect to the competency driver, the loan application submitted by the former government to the IDB, for funding the seamless education system included inclusive education and early childhood education as well as the inclusive education policy. Both were very well developed were very detailed. These two documents (i.e., the loan application and the inclusive education policy) addressed what was needed at the national, MoE, education district, and community levels so that the schools could build capacity for implementing inclusive early education. The documents developed by the government addressed staffing, training and coaching in facilitating the implementation of inclusive education in the education system. In reality however the interviews, document reviews and observations indicate that the country did not have the workforce capacity to realize the staffing goal required for this initiative.

Interviews with ministry officials, observations both during the data collection process and before, as well as my field notes suggested that a great deal of time and effort went in to composing these documents. However, there was a perception held by the teachers and assistant teachers interviewed at the ECCE center, together with half of the teachers who responded to the survey, that adequate time was not spent planning for inclusive education.

The MoE officials who were interviewed recognized that although the number of government-owned early childhood centers was increasing, there was a shortage of qualified early childhood educators in the country who could implement inclusive education. The former administration had taken several steps to correct the shortage issue. The MoE collaborated with tertiary-level institutions to modify their course

content to include inclusive education, special education, and use of the national early childhood curriculum guide. Interviews with decision makers and supervisors from both the Student Support Services (SSS) unit and Early Childhood Unit confirmed that these course offerings were embedded into degree programs. As a graduate of the program and former lecturer, I can also verify that special education is offered as a course in the one year Certificate Program and three courses are part of the degree program. At the ECCE center where I did my observation, both the teacher and the assistant teacher shared during their interviews that special education was a component of their training at the University of the West Indies St. Augustine and SERVOL respectively. Similarly, responses to the survey question related to professional training for inclusive education indicated that 56% of teachers agreed that their training was compatible with IE.

As a further point of verification of the course offerings, the websites of two tertiary institutions that prepare teachers for schools in Trinidad and Tobago (TT) were reviewed. The University of the West Indies Open Campus Certificate Course in Early Childhood Education and the University of the West Indies Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education both list special education as components of their programs. I was not able to verify if special education was a component of the SERVOL course offerings or the University of Trinidad and Tobago offerings in their Bachelor's of Education with a specialization in early childhood education. While the teachers agreed that their training was compatible with IE, like those teachers in Apinwong's research (2002) they also expressed concerns about lack of knowledge and need for suitably qualified staff. As suggested by Cox (2010) the teachers needed training before, during, and after implementation to ensure that inclusion continued and that teachers felt supported.

While the former MoE was attempting to increase the number of trained ECCE teachers through expanding tertiary program offerings, the number of graduates was not sufficient for the increasing quantity of ECCE centers being constructed. Therefore, the former MoE responded by reconfiguring the staffing at schools to have more assistant teachers and one administrator or head teacher. However, the shortage of qualified ECCE teachers became compounded by the administrative decision of the current government not to renew any contracts in the ECCE unit, which left some schools with no teachers for a period of time. When the government decided to renew contracts, the staffing at schools was again reconfigured. The administrator teachers were assigned as cluster managers overseeing the operation of three to four schools in a district; some schools had one teacher and only assistant teachers; some had all assistant teachers. However, one government official who was interviewed indicated that the cluster system was tried before but was not successful because of the administrative burden on the individual cluster manager. This was evident when the cluster manager visited the ECCE center where I was observing. Her focus appeared to be limited to ensuring the center was operating smoothly by reviewing paper work. Although she interacted informally with the teachers, she did not provide instructional guidance or supervision.

The SSS unit responsible for implementation of the inclusive education project also provided training separately from the ECCE unit. The SSS training was not specifically targeted to teachers at the ECCE pilot centers. The training was open to all ECCE teachers and teachers in infants Level 1 and 2 (analogous to Kindergarten and grade one in the U.S.). Although decision makers at the SSS unit reported that approximately 50% of the teachers who participated in the training were from early

childhood centers, attendance records were not available to verify if those in attendance came from the pilot ECCE centers. Teachers at the ECCE center where I observed indicated that they were aware of the training offered by the SSS unit but did not participate because there was neither compensation for travel nor any other incentive. Responses to the survey item about whether expert training in inclusive education had been provided showed that respondents neither agreed nor disagreed about this topic. However, 61% of the teacher respondents disagreed with the statement that training and technical assistance was readily available to those implementing IE. The provision of training by the SSS unit for ECCE educators with the inability to target staff at the pilot inclusive centers suggests that the units were not working together to realize the same goal of developing a set of pilot centers that would be models of inclusive education.

According to interviews with current MoE officials, the SSS unit understood the need for continued supervision and coaching of teachers in inclusive practices even after formal training and thus tailored the IDB loan document and IE policy to require that teachers receive ongoing coaching and supervision. Funds were allocated as part of the loan to provide special training to managers and supervisors who were to serve as coaches in the implementation of inclusive education. However, according to interviews with MoE officials, a lack of human resources at the level of the SSS unit prevented the training of these individuals to provide the ongoing coaching and supervision at the classroom level.

The former administration of the ECCE unit hired a number of field officers who provided ongoing supervision in the areas of curriculum implementation, quality assurance, and family and community support. Yet, the SSS unit did not tap into this

ready pool of personnel to serve as coaches. The SSS unit may have had greater impact by training these field officers as coaches or supervisors since they were already interacting with teachers and community members. Again, the lack of coordinated planning and use of resources between units in the MoE impacted implementation of the IE goals.

In summary, it appears that the former government made attempts to ensure that ECCE teachers were competent in their ability to offer an inclusive environment for children. The execution, however, does not appear to have yielded the required result. First, I was unable to verify the number of teachers at pilot ECCE centers that had received training and neither could the SSS unit. The teachers who were surveyed, however, felt competent in their professional training but expressed the need for more focused skills training in providing inclusive education. Thus, although the former MoE had systems in place to improve competency, the SSS unit and the ECCE unit lacked the collaborative relationship and organizational structures to facilitate initiation of the inclusive education plan at the early childhood level.

While training and external support were present, acting as a key factor for initiation of early childhood inclusion, the training was not strategically targeted to those who needed to implement inclusive education. Absence of the quantity of persons to fill the human capacity needed for this venture further affected realization of ensuring competency for the inclusive education initiative. These findings support the work of Lieber et al. (2000) and Purcell (2003) that notes key factors can act as barriers to implementation.

The second driver in the Fixsen et al. (2008) framework refers to organization. Lieber et al. (2000) also note the importance of organizational structure as a key component to implementation. The components of the driver are system intervention, facilitative administration, and decision support data systems. There is a little evidence of the use of the components by the former MoE in the implementation efforts in TT, specifically facilitative administration and decision support data systems. The first component, system intervention, was evident in the former MoE's work to procure funding for education reform through a seamless education program, which included inclusive education and early childhood education. Second, the SSS unit of the former MoE created a National Inclusive Education Policy, which was subsequently approved by the government cabinet. Third, the ECCE unit created a National Early Childhood Curriculum Guide, and a standards document for the operation of ECCE centers.

Although the review of the documents revealed interrelated themes such as equality of opportunity, valuing diversity, access, provision for curriculum assessment, and the importance of parent and community partnerships, the documents were created by different agencies of the MoE. The goal of the National Policy of Inclusive Education is to provide an inclusive education that is available, accessible, acceptable, and adaptable to all learners throughout the education system it is administered by the SSS unit. The National Early Childhood Curriculum Guide and a standards document for the operation of ECCE centers focus on children from birth to five years and is overseen by the ECCE unit. The goal of both units overlap perfectly, however, the staff in these units has not reoriented their thinking and actions to be more inclusive. Other units in the MoE as well as its own staff perceive the SSS unit as being responsible only for policies and

initiatives specifically for children with disabilities or special needs. This perception of a separate education system is so ingrained in the culture of the MoE and the schools that I believe that IE was seen as an add-on to ECCE and not intrinsically built into the ECCE agenda or the SSS agenda.

Facilitative administration as a component of the organization driver refers to enabling a school to take charge of the implementation of an initiative. Examples of facilitative administration include provision in the IE policy for addressing needs for school funding with allocations for each child, provision for school management, and supports such as facilitators in the MoE and centers. Yet, the interviews, documents, and field notes showed little evidence of facilitative administration practices or processes within the current MoE that would aid centers in carrying out the system interventions to promote IE early childhood education. Another example of facilitative administration was the move towards decentralization of education implemented by the former government. This would have allowed education districts to assume some autonomy in the way they managed their schools. The districts would have received the funding and supports to implement the IE agenda. However, I found no evidence that this was occurring possibly as the result of the change in government. Funds and supports continued managed at the MoE level.

A third component of the organization driver is decision support data systems, which should be used to monitor or inform system-level interventions of an initiative. The decision to apply to the IDB for a loan, the creation of an IE policy, creation of the National Early Childhood Care and Education Curriculum Guide, and the implementation of Standards for Regulating Early Childhood Care and Education Centers were all were

informed by data compiled in reports by foreign consultants. Both the SSS unit and the ECCE unit of the MoE collect a great deal of data; there is, however, no system in place to aggregate these data in a way that would allow for manipulation and analysis to inform decision-making. Referral forms sent to the SSS unit are provided to the officer for the district from which the form was generated. The officer notes the pertinent information on the form that would help him or her in responding to the issue (name of school, teacher, and age of child, description of situation or type of service requested); the form is then filed by date in a filing cabinet. Some SSS officers may keep a paper file on a particular child or situation at a particular school. The ECCE unit collects socioeconomic data on each child. This data is used to inform the Ministry of Social Development of children from families who may be in need of social assistance. Other data such as child assessments are provided to parents and copies placed in a file cabinet. Collectively, none of these data appear from interviews, observations, survey, or field notes to be used together to assess implementation of either IE or the early childhood education policies.

In summary, the organization driver was in use however the systems interventions appeared to be the only component executed with effect. Although documents and interviews reflect intent to facilitate ECCE centers in the implementation of IE, the intent was never executed. Although much emphasis is placed on collecting data, there was little use of data to inform decisions other than those of the foreign consultants. I believe if data were being used in an analytical way, the SSS unit and ECCE unit may have come to notice commonalities and ways they could support each other.

Leadership is the third driver in the framework; the components of the driver are leadership for technical challenges and leadership for adaptive challenges. Technical



challenges have clearly defined parameters; often a unit or units in the MoE are accountable or responsible for the challenge. Technical leaders intervene to assist the unit in addressing the best ways to address the challenge and provide reliable outcomes. An example of a challenge that required technical leadership was that of training for staff already working in IE centers. Leaders in the MoE identified the challenge and documented it in the loan application. According to interviews with MoE officials, leaders were clear as to the approach for training. Technical leadership was also observed at the center where my observations were conducted. The cluster manager identified professionalism as an issue with teachers and decided to have a meeting with staff from all three centers under her purview. The cluster manager invited a senior business manager to address the staff. In my interview with the cluster manager, she indicated she selected to invite a non-affiliate of the MoE or the school with the intent of presenting a neutral perspective. Prior to the staff meeting, she provided the facilitator with a list of possible items she wanted to be addressed. I noted that during the meeting when the facilitator attempted to engage her directly in the presentation she refrained by asking a question or inviting a staff member to respond.

The component of adaptive leadership was also seen in the implementation of inclusive education at ECCE centers. Adaptive leaders are required when there is less agreement about the definitions of the challenge and ways to approach or address the challenge. This component was most apparent in the difference of vision between the former MoE and the current MoE in the approach to addressing inclusive education. The former MoE was focused on inclusive education aimed at all children with special needs and empowering all teachers, starting first with the pilot centers. The new government's

approach was to provide intervention to improve cognitive processing. Persons without any education training are providing this cognitive processing intervention; the interviews and observations indicate that teachers at the center where I conducted observations had little information about the intervention. The former and current MoE could not resolve their challenges and according to my field notes these adaptive challenges lead to resignations and early retirements of many MoE officials.

In summary, I believe the leadership driver is essential for the execution of each driver. Cox (2010), identified leadership and common program philosophy as essential to implementation. In this study change in leadership and program philosophy negatively impacted implementation. Additionally, there was no evidence of stakeholders (parents, community members, advocacy associations) involvement in creation or implementation of the inclusive education policy. Lack of parent and community support was cited by Apingwong (2002) as a barrier to implementation in Thailand. I did not use parents as a source for data collection nor did parent support appear as an influence for or against implementation in this study. The leadership driving implementation as noted in documents reviewed, interviews conducted, responses to the survey were all from the MoE head office or heads of the various units.

### **Research Question 2: Implementation Reflective of UNESCO Principles**

To explore this question, I used education through the inclusion lens as put forward by UNESCO. As discussed in Chapter Two, education through the inclusion lens comes from a right to education perspective. The education system is assumed to have full responsibility for ensuring all children have access to education. In addition, the education system should be capable of handling diversity of learning through:

- Flexible teaching methods
- Reorientation teacher education
- Providing a flexible curriculum
- Welcoming diversity in all its forms
- Involving parents and the community
- Early identification and remediation of children at risk of failure

Instruction should be innovative using current teaching aids, equipment, and information communication technologies (ICTs). The environment should be child-friendly and responsive. Teachers and other professionals should be deliberately and actively promoting inclusion for all.

**Education as right for all.** Both former and current MoE administrations see education as a right for all children. There were no children with diagnosed disabilities at the center where I conducted observations, which created a challenge in addressing this research question. However, I reported on two children who were identified as possibly having special needs. These two children were also receiving interventions being provided by the current MoE.

Although the former MoE espouses inclusive education, evidence of this principle was not evident in any policy document at the center where I conducted observations. Yet, approximately 50% of teachers expressed agreement with the survey statement that their center set clear and specific goals related to inclusive education. The head teacher shared they had no documents and used whatever was sent by the ECCE unit. Teachers, while aware of the IE policy, appeared to be detached as if inclusion was the responsibility of another group. That said, the head teacher and the more seasoned

assistant teacher appeared to have the disposition to be able to adapt and modify their instruction if provided with coaching. This was evident when I asked about the day of the week being a color and the change was made the next day. The ability to be flexible was also noted in the way adjustments would be made during circle time or in small group activities. As an example, the rolling of the paper for one student was a good modification, however, he could have been encouraged to put the pieces on the paper himself.

**Reorientation of teacher education.** The need for reorientation of teacher education is apparent in the pilot schools involved in the study. On the survey, 55% of teachers expressed agreement that their professional training was compatible with IE, however, 88% of the teachers did not agree that they were adequately trained to include children with special needs. The feeling of incapability was an emerging theme as a response to the open-ended question on the survey. The same sentiments were echoed during interviews with the teachers at the ECCE center where I conducted observations. Teachers asserted that their professional training did include special education and working with children who had special needs but reported feeling they were not capable of doing so. The observations conducted however, suggested evidence of inclusive practices both in the environment and through teacher child interactions.

An example of the environment reflecting principles of inclusivity is that the physical space is open, divided by activity centers, and appeared to welcome diversity of culture, religion and ability as was evident in pictures of different ethnic groups and various religious practices in the circle area along with pictures of children with visible impairments. In addition, the dress up and home corner had clothing and household

implements representative of African, Indian, and Chinese cultures. Teachers interacting with children in these centers used the appropriate names for clothing and utensils and modeled appropriate use. Children were observed doing the same when at the center alone. Although inclusivity was reflected inside, the outdoor space had items to suggest children have access and could be included, but this was not the case. A ramp was present to facilitate children using wheelchairs for mobility; however, there was a gap between where the ramp started and the paved play area ended. In addition, the paved play area did not have an incline so that the child could access the play field. These physical challenges with the outdoor infrastructure may be beyond the teachers' ability to address.

The child interactions also reflected inclusive principles. In providing instruction, teachers were observed to keep close to Sonia to assist her or redirect her behavior as necessary. Teachers were always responsive to children; they would sit with them on the floor and build puzzles during morning free play and always sat with the children during lunchtime engaging in conversation. I observed teachers encouraging John who had fine motor issues to play with blocks; as they played, I observed the head teacher demonstrating the pincer grasp and encouraging John to hold blocks the same way.

This inconsistency between teachers' practice and what they think themselves capable of suggests the need for reorientation of teacher education or reinforcement of teacher capability. Teachers neither agreed nor disagreed to the statement about feedback and recognition for their implementation efforts on the survey. As I observed, however, the cluster administrator does not have enough time at the center to observe inclusive practices of the teachers in order to provide positive feedback and reinforcement. A MoE

decision maker mentioned the ineffectiveness of the cluster system for this reason during an interview.

**Flexible curriculum.** The National Early Childhood Curriculum Guide promotes the use of the project based learning approach, which was reported to allow children of varying abilities to engage in the activities. The children at the center were not engaged in any projects during the period I conducted observations nor was there evidence of projects which had been completed. Further, the curriculum requires purposeful planning and encourages activities to be around a theme; the center schedule, therefore, had time built in for activity planning. It appeared to me, however, that teachers discussed what they would be doing on the day or the day before during their planning period. During my time at the center, I did not hear reference to the National Curriculum during planning. Teachers flipped through activity books and shared ideas before coming to a decision about what children would be involved in the next day.

**Involvement of parents and the community.** Involvement of parents and the community was not evident. Parents of most the children were observed either in the morning or in the evening dropping off or collecting their children, however, there was no space to welcome parents. Parents were observed standing around chatting with the custodian and security guard but there was little purposeful interaction with the teachers. A parent meeting was held during my observation time. The meeting related to upcoming sports and fun day. The cluster manager took charge of the meeting by providing parents with details of what was expected in regards to their attire, attendance, assistance with supervision of children, and so on. Parents listened to what was said with

little participation. There was also no evidence of community involvement over the two weeks I observed.

**Early identification and remediation.** Early identification and remediation of children at risk may be the goal of the current MoE. The teachers reported that all children at the center were assessed for neurodevelopmental difficulties. The head teacher reported that 20 children tested positive and were receiving interventions. These interventions involved use of the Simply Smarter Kid's app on an Ipad. Members of the current MoE were not permitted to share more information about the intervention; this is another difficulty to adequately addressing this research question.

There were no children with documented disabilities at the ECCE center where I conducted observations. Therefore, I analyzed the general practices at the center through the inclusion lens. The observations suggest that some inclusive practices were in use however there is a need for teacher reorientation. Interestingly, the areas that I found most absent, the use of current teaching aids and community parent involvement, are the same areas identified under the Fixsen et al. (2008) model for greater facilitative administration for schools to be effective in implementing inclusive education.

## **Summary**

In this study, I assessed the process of implementing inclusive education policy at the early childhood level and the ways in which teachers' practices reflected principles of effective inclusion according to principles outlined by UNESCO. I found that the former MoE had documented a number of policies and interventions that correspond to components of Fixsen et al.'s (2008) implementation drivers. Yet, these drivers were either inconsistently applied or when the new government came to power abandoned.

Also, while the former MoE instituted systems interventions at a macro level, attention to facilitative administration appeared lacking. In addition, the IADB released funds in tranches requiring a report before each policy or interventions took place and an assessment of completion before triggering release of the next tranche. The reports accurately document the activities as having been completed. Looking past the reports to progress related to the implementation of inclusive education the reports and policy documents tracking progress related to this initiative do not align with practice. Despite finding components of the Fixsen et al (2008). framework present in the documents, as well as ample funds to implement the inclusive education, young children with special needs or disabilities were not observed at ECCE centers.

The policies outlining the process of implementing inclusive education were well designed and accounted for the three drivers of the implementation framework used to assess progress. The key influences to the initiation and maintenance of inclusive early childhood education were also well documented. The practice of implementation however did not reflect the implementation drivers. The SSS unit did not/does not have enough trained personnel to facilitate administration of inclusive education at the early childhood level. The ECCE unit under the former MoE however had numerous facilitators but the SSS unit did not utilize them and there was no coordination or collaboration between units. Initial implementation of inclusive early childhood education would have been more effective if ECCE facilitators had been afforded the necessary training to support ECCE teachers already in the classroom in successfully including children with special needs. As part of their training early childhood teachers completed course work related to education of young children with disabilities,



collaboration with the SSS unit for training of facilitators who could then provide the continued training suggested by Cox (2010). This would have allowed for the continued support of teachers and perhaps have realized the goal of inclusive education.

The former government initiated inclusive education as part of the seamless education component of the Vision 2020. The former Prime Minister articulated Vision 2020 as ‘roadmap’ to becoming recognized as developed country. As the UN and UNESCO strengthened emphasis on Education for All and pressured all countries to make measurable progress towards the realization of that goal, they also encouraged international lenders to work with nations seeking loans for education purposes. The goals of EFA also include inclusive education. Thus, while Trinidad and Tobago provides free education for all children from early childhood (3 years) to secondary (15-17) and assisted tertiary education, the country does not have an inclusive education system. While there are government special schools for children with disabilities, the location of many of these schools act as a barrier for children who are unable to commute the long distances to attend. Very young children with disabilities have no options for education.

The former government was likely influenced to initiate the push for inclusive education by the international focus. Specifically, during that period of time UNESCO had planned several regional conferences in preparation for the International Conference on Inclusive Education in Geneva, one of which was planned for the Caribbean Region. There were expectations that the various Caribbean nations would present their progress toward achieving inclusive education. In addition, the funds available from the IDB provided even more of an incentive for governments to initiate inclusive education.

Therefore, the former government of Trinidad and Tobago, similar to many other governments, moved quickly to develop inclusive education policies without the capacity to implement those policies (Armstrong, Armstrong, Lynch, and Severin 2005).

The government created a strategic plan of action for implementation of inclusive education that specified time lines and responsibilities for various agencies. These plans and other documents however did not result in the goal of creating inclusive education leaving –young children with disabilities –without access to early childhood education.

Among the many things that the Ministry might have done to promote inclusive education, was to, provide some type of incentive for the teachers at the pilot centers that could have facilitated greater participation in the initiative. The lack of trained teachers continued to be a priority for the former MoE however there were just not enough persons enrolling in and graduating from ECCE programs to adequately fill the need at the early childhood centers. The lack of staff at the SSS unit to carry out coaching and mentoring further impacted the capacity to implement inclusion in the early childhood centers. While the SSS lacked the human capacity to provide the necessary mentoring and supervision to facilitate change in behavior towards inclusive education, the ECCE unit under the former administration had a sizable group of field officers providing supervision in various areas. The SSS unit may have achieved greater impact by focusing on training and equipping ECCE facilitators with the knowledge and skills needed to include children with special needs as part of having ECCE quality. The facilitators, because of their constant contact with the teachers at the ECCE centers, would have been able to provide supports and assessment related to implementing inclusive education that was absent in the findings.

These various findings point to three major issues with the implementation of inclusive early childhood education in TT: 1) funding was not well targeted to realize the goals of an intervention, 2) there was a lack of coordination between units of the government and 3) there was balkanization of government administrations.

Lack of coordination between units of the MoE resulted in poor use of time, funds, and human resources. Even with measures built into loans provided by international lending agencies to ensure funds were used appropriately as well as efficiently, there were several observed instances where funds were not used in the most effective way. For example ramps were constructed at early childhood centers but the center remained inaccessible to children using wheelchairs for mobility. Another example is that teachers were trained however not the teachers expected to implement inclusive education. In addition the SSS unit provided training to early childhood teacher however teachers at the pilot schools were not required to attend. If there had been better collaboration and communication among the various agencies funds may have been used more effectively. As a result of the poorly implemented teachers training those surveyed and interviewed expressed concerns about their ability to teach in an inclusive setting. The need for appropriate staff development was identified by Cox (2010) as essential for the development, implementation and maintenance of inclusive preschools. Adequate professional development was also noted by Lieber et al (2000) and Purcell (2003) as essential to effectively implement inclusive education.

Lack of coordination between two unit SSS and ECCE prevented the implementation of inclusive education at the ECCE level. In the studies conducted by Lieber et al. (2000), and Purcell (2003) organizational structure more than any other

factor was found to often become a barrier and not a facilitator of inclusive practices. It would appear that cooperation towards realization of a common goal is not valued. An interesting similarity in finding between this study and that of Johnstone (2005) is that the unit responsible for special education in Lesotho and Trinidad and Tobago was also responsible for dissemination of training, policies and all matters related to inclusive education. The unit in Lesotho also similar to the one in Trinidad was significantly understaffed. While the systems interventions had occurred in both countries the organizations charged with facilitating implementing were not adequately equipped. Ideally should data systems have been in place to support the SSS in TT to make informed decisions it may have been compensation for the lack of human power at the unit and created a better organizational structure.

The inability to address technical challenges has led to balkanization of government administrations. The change in government, which occurred as the previous administration was moving toward the third phase of inclusive education implementation. However, the former MoE never had the necessary trained personnel at the SSS level to implement the new policy and past history and culture regarding children with special needs and the SSS unit resulted in little cooperation with the ECCE units. The decision of the new minister of education to suspend all ECCE projects and not renew contracts of officers in the ECCE unit resulted in reduced staff throughout the ECCE division and the government operated ECCE centers. In addition, the persons interviewed in the ECCE unit in the current MoE had little information about the re-conceptualized plan of the new government for inclusive education. Perhaps more significantly, the new Minister of Education appointed a steering committee to manage the ECCE unit. None of the

members of this committee are reported to have much knowledge of the plans and activities related to implementing inclusive education under the current or previous administration. Taken together, there were a number of issues that pointed toward the limited or ineffective implementation of inclusive early childhood education.

The Fixsen et al. (2008) framework was useful in identifying where the gaps in implementation were occurring. The integrated and compensatory components did not operate well in this instance because the right groups were not being specifically targeted. In addition, the SSS unit and ECCE unit did not appear to have the type of collaboration to facilitated reorientation of viewing every child as having some type of special need. The funding for this initiative was extensive; however, children who have special needs and their families, the intended beneficiaries of inclusive education, were not impacted. The model worked to identify gaps and the funding agency requires reporting before disbursement of funds. Linking funding to the implementation of complements to the target groups is one way to decrease the gap. As an example, pilot centers needed to be identified and reported to the IDB, linking funding to ensuring competency of the staff at the pilot centers may have resulted in an increased number of teachers at pilot centers being trained.

### **Limitations of the Study**

There are several limitations to this study. One limitation of the study is that the results are not generalizable to other settings. This is true with all case studies, since they focus on understanding meaning and process in a specific context (Merriam, 2009). Researchers can make connections to similar situations through careful review of the applicability, circumstances, and research findings of this case study to their situation. As

noted earlier, the change in government that occurred prior to the beginning of this study resulted in a number of changes in organization and staffing. This limited the number of teachers who could be surveyed and the number of decision makers who could be interviewed, and reduced the sites by one, which was critical for comparison since the governing structure is different. A further limitation to the study was the lack of information about the new government's approach to inclusive education. This lack of data did not allow for comparisons between the initiatives of the former and the current MoE administration.

I did not include parent, or disability advocacy groups as participants. While the pilot center had no children with documented disabilities, children had been tested by the ICAN consultant and were receiving interventions at the center. Interviewing parents about their perceptions of the intervention being conducted could have strengthened the study by giving more information about the new initiative. Including disability advocacy groups, particularly those who speak for young children, would have allowed the dimension of what the stakeholders require to emerge.

In addition, there were no children with documented disabilities enrolled at the pilot center and this also limited the study. Although I observed two children identified by the head teacher as possibly having special needs, the assistant teachers' interactions with these children may not have been influenced by this knowledge.

### **Future Research**

The findings of this study were descriptive of one situation in which the former administration was moving towards one type of program before a change in administration. The current government put all initiatives of the former administration on

hold for almost two years while they conducted situation analyses. This may be true for other developing countries where balkanization of opposing government parties is common. The following recommendations for future research are suggested:

- A detailed investigation into what the current intervention entails and the supporting data
- A study with one international funding agency assessing their approach to accountability when funding a new initiative using the Fixsen model.
- Development and testing of an assessment tool for funding agencies that allows of easy administration with decision makers, supervisors and practitioners to assess use of funds.
- A longitudinal study of children's progress as a result of the intervention provided by the current government
- An expansion of this study to include observations at all pilot centers
- Conducting the climate survey with teachers at all government early childhood centers
- Community investigations to learn about care-taking of young children with special needs and disabilities

This study intended to identify where the gaps exist between creation of a policy and implementation. As I compiled and reviewed my findings other issues came to mind. The potential research identified above will continue to illuminate the factors necessary for closing the gap between policy intention and implementation.

## Chapter Summary

The Fixsen et al. (2008) framework was useful in identifying where the gaps in implementation were occurring. The integrated and compensatory components did not operate well in this instance because the right groups were not being specifically targeted. In addition, the SSS unit and ECCE unit did not appear to have the type of collaboration to facilitate reorientation of viewing every child as having some type of special need. The funding for this initiative was extensive, however, children who have special needs and their families, the intended beneficiaries of inclusive education, were not impacted. The model works to identify gaps and the funding agency requires reporting before disbursement of funds. Linking the funding of implementation of components to the target groups is one way to decrease the gap. As an example, pilot centers were identified as part of the loan agreement and reported to the IDB, linking funding to ensuring competency of the staff at the pilot centers may have resulted in an increased number of teachers at pilot centers being trained. The SSS unit was charged with implementing the policy, linking funding to ensuring components of the organizational driver are present would have assisted the small group of staff members in being more effective facilitators providing oversight for implementation on inclusive education. Linking the funding to ensuring that specific objectives or components of the Fixsen et al. framework were met and that these objectives were complimentary and integrated is a possible way to address the policy to implementation gap.

As the year 2015 approaches UNESCO is not able to report that any country has achieved even one of the Education for All targets. Non-profit organizations such as the Global Campaign for Education have begun to question and investigate the appropriate use of



funds provided by international donors. Preliminary findings were presented during the 2014 United Nations 12th Session of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. The findings indicate many of the same issues that I discovered as part of my study. In the quest to promote inclusive education, governments across the world appear to be engaging in many activities such as creating ramps and providing teacher education. However there is little coordination and oversight. The result is that many young children with disabilities across the world are still waiting to access education.

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A: Major concerns and concrete areas of action identified at the ICE preparatory regional meetings**

#### **A. Attitudinal changes and policy development**

- The term inclusive education needs to be further clarified and adopted by educators, governmental and non-governmental organizations, policy-makers and social actors.
- The lack of understanding, awareness and support in society about inclusive education needs to be addressed through advocacy and dialogue at regional and national levels.
- Long-term sustainable policies of economic and social development need to take inclusive education into account.
- An integral multi-sectoral and collaborative approach is needed to guarantee the right to education.
- Regional and national dialogues are needed to ensure public understanding, awareness and support of policies.

#### **B. Ensuring inclusion through early childhood care and education**

- Early childhood interventions should be seen as a sustainable way to guarantee the right to education for all children from the start.

#### **C. Inclusive curricula**

- Cohesive transition and articulation of the curriculum between early childhood, primary and secondary education are key factors in preventing drop-outs from level to level and ensuring retention.
- Curricular changes are necessary in order to support flexible learning and assessment.
- Opportunities for informal and non-formal education should be developed in the curriculum.
- A highly academic, heavily overloaded curriculum is counterproductive to inclusive education.
- Multiple stakeholders should be encouraged to participate in curriculum design.

#### **D. Teachers and teacher education**

- Teacher-education programmes, (both pre-service and in-service) should be reoriented and aligned to inclusive education approaches in order to give teachers the pedagogical capacities necessary to make diversity work in the classroom and in line with reformed curricula.
- Training of all education professionals, including members of the community, are essential to supporting an inclusive school.
- The creation of incentives renewing teachers' social status and improving their living conditions are necessary pre-conditions to professionalizing the role of teachers (e.g. increasing salaries, providing better living quarters, providing home leaves, increasing respect for their work, etc.)

#### **E. Resources and legislation**

- National legislation should be changed and revised to incorporate notions of inclusive education.
- International conventions should be signed and ratified and reflected in national legislation. Implementation of policy and laws should be promoted and enforced.
- Budgetary allocations for inclusive education should be equitable, transparent, accountable and efficient.

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0017/001778/177849e.pdf>

**Appendix B :**  
An Overview of International Policies and Their Commonalities

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*International Policy Documents on Rights to Inclusive Education Services*

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Document	Agency	Year	Age	Parental Rights	Legislation	Training	Inclusive Education
Universal Declaration of Human Rights	UN	1948	G	*			
Convention Against Discrimination in Education	UNESCO	1960	G	*	*		
Declaration on the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons	UN	1971	G				
Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons	UN	1975	G				
Sundberg Declaration	UNESCO	1981	EC	*	*	*	
World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons	UN	1982	EC	*	*	*	
Tallinn Guidelines for Action on Human Resources Development	UN	1989	EC		*	*	*
Convention on the Rights of the Child	UNESCO	1990	G	*	*		

World Declaration on Education for All	UNESCO	1990	G		*	*	*
Standard Rules on Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities	UN	1993	G	*	*	*	*
World Conference on Special Needs Education, Salamanca	UNESCO	1994	G + EC	*	*	*	*
Millennium Declaration: Millennium Development Goals	UN	2000	G				
World Education Forum: Education for All	UNESCO	2000	G + EC	*	*	*	*
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	UN	2008	G + EC	*	*	*	*

**Appendix C**  
**BOOKLET**  
**Assessing the process of implementing inclusive education at the early childhood level in Trinidad and Tobago**

Assessing the process of implementing  
inclusive education at the early childhood level in  
Trinidad and Tobago



Lenisa N Joseph  
62 Back Street  
Tunapuna, Trinidad and Tobago

**School Name**  
**School Address**

Assessing the process of  
implementing inclusive  
education at the early  
childhood level in  
Trinidad and Tobago



Survey for  
early childhood educators

This study examines how inclusive education is being implemented at the early childhood level in Trinidad and Tobago. Examining how policies that affect children with disabilities and special needs are implemented increases the likelihood of achieving better implementation and greater gains of children with disabilities.

There are six (6) pages of the document.  
The survey should take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

**Please read the following questions carefully and place an X in the column to indicate how strongly you agree with the following questions. Please answer all questions.**

**Thank you for participating in this study.**

**Thank you, very much for the time you took to complete this survey. The information you provided will assist in improving the way policies are implemented for young children with disabilities.**

Should you require more information please contact **Lenisa N Joseph**

January –April, 2013

Local Telephone 1 (868) 762-7548  
Local Address 62 Back Street,  
Tunapuna,  
Trinidad and Tobago

April and after

US Telephone 1 (240) 593-7095  
US Address 2200 Montgomery St.  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

In the space below please describe your experience educating children with disabilities or special needs.

### The End

Please review the document and be sure you have answered all the questions.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Does Not Exist in our organization	Don't Know
1. Implementing inclusive education is compatible with the philosophy of the Ministry of Education as a whole.							
2. Ministry officials made the guidelines for implementing inclusive education clear to teachers who have to implement the policy.							
3. Inclusive education is being implemented at this early childhood care and education center as prescribed by the experts from the Ministry.							
4. Educators who are expected to implement inclusive education are doing so willingly in carrying out their job duties.							
5. The inclusive education implementation guidelines are being used "to the letter" as prescribed by its developers and trainers.							
6. District or community issues interfered with the implementation of inclusive education at this early childhood center.							

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Does Not Exist in our organization	Don't know
7. The "benefits" to be gained from implementing inclusive education far exceed the "costs".							
8. Staff are adequately trained to include children with disabilities and special needs at this early childhood center.							
9. Positive consequences occurred at this early childhood center as a result of implementing inclusive education.							
10. All young children with disabilities and special needs now have access to early childhood care and education services.							
11. The teachers at this early childhood center are committed to providing inclusive early childhood education services.							
12. This early childhood center's overall effectiveness has improved as a result of implementing inclusive education.							

## DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

### Age

Please mark a ✓ in the box to indicate your age range.

20 years or less ☐ 21-30 years ☐

31- 40 years ☐

41-50 years ☐

51-60 years ☐ 61 years or more ☐

### Gender

Please mark a ✓ in the box to indicate your gender.

Male ☐ Female ☐

### Position at school

Please mark a ✓ in the box to indicate your position at this early childhood center.

Head teacher ☐

Teacher ☐

Assistant Teacher ☐

### Experience

Please write in the number of years you have been teaching altogether.

Number of Years Teaching: \_\_\_\_\_

Please write in the number of years you have been teaching at the early childhood level.

Number of Years Teaching at ECCE level: \_\_\_\_\_

Please write in the number of years you have been teaching at this early childhood center.

Number of years at current center: \_\_\_\_\_

### Education

Please check all that apply:

☐ High School

☐ Teacher's College Diploma in Teacher Education

☐ School of Continuing Education Certificate

☐ Associates Degree

☐ Bachelors Degree

☐ Masters Degree

☐ Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_



	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Does Not Exist in our organization	Don't know
31. It is difficult to attract and/or retain qualified staff needed to include children with disabilities and special needs.							
32. Based on data available, the inclusive education policy has been effective in enrolling young children with disabilities into early childhood centers.							
33. Many things needed to change at this early childhood center in order for inclusive education to be implemented as prescribed.							
34. The effectiveness of inclusive education is apparent to stakeholders outside this early childhood center.							
35. Inclusive education is compatible with the professional training of staff at this early childhood center.							

**Almost finished!**  
**PLEASE REVIEW AND ENSURE YOU**  
**HAVE RESPONDED TO ALL THE**  
**QUESTIONS.**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Does Not Exist in our organization	Don't know
13. Children with disabilities and those with special needs are displaying developmental gains as an outcome of inclusive education.							
14. Staff receives supervision and coaching related to implementing inclusive education on a regular basis.							
15. There is adequate time spent in planning the details of implementing inclusive education in Trinidad and Tobago.							
16. Top administrators from the Ministry of Education strongly support the ongoing implementation of inclusive education.							
17. Staff gets positive feedback and/or recognition for their efforts implementing inclusive education.							
18. Top administrators from the Ministry of Education minimized obstacles and barriers to implementing inclusive education at this early childhood center.							

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Does Not Exist in our organization	Don't Know
19. Funding issues interfered with the implementation of inclusive education at this early childhood center.							
20. Implementing inclusive education involved taking a risk at this early childhood center.							
21. This early childhood center set clear and specific goals related to implementing inclusive education.							
22. Providing inclusive education has been consistent over time at this early childhood center.							
23. Experts in inclusive education have provided training for teachers to implement inclusive education.							
24. There are performance-monitoring systems in place to guide the implementation of inclusive education at this and other early childhood centers.							

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Does Not Exist in our organization	Don't Know
25. Training and technical assistance are readily available to staff involved implementing inclusive education.							
26. Adequate resources have been made available by the Ministry of Education to include children with special needs and disabilities.							
27. The "costs" of inclusive education far exceed any benefits that may occur.							
28. Staff are been encouraged to express concerns that arise in the course of implementing inclusive education.							
29. The implementation of inclusive education is being seen as a regular part of the programming offered to the school community.							
30. Efforts are in the works to see that inclusive education becomes a permanent part of our education system.							

## **Appendix D**

### **Interview Protocol for Decision Makers and Supervisors**

#### **Assessing the process of implementing inclusive education at the early childhood level in Trinidad and Tobago**

**\*\*Items in italics are probes to be used to capture descriptive data.**

Tell me about the Ministry of Education's Plan of action concerning implementing inclusive education

*How do you define inclusion?*

*What is the goal of the Ministry of Education in the implementation of inclusive education?*

*What does it look like from the Ministry perspective in the Early Childhood Care and Education Classroom?*

#### **Staff Selection**

Tell me about the selection process for teachers and supervisors involved in inclusive education at the early childhood level.

*Did teachers volunteer? Were people specifically hired?*

*Was there a set of requirements?*

*Were persons already in place and reassigned?*

#### **Training**

Can you please share how teachers were prepared to teach in inclusive early childhood classrooms?

*Was any training provided and how that was conducted?*

*How long did the training last?*

*Who provided the training? How was the training provider selected?*

*Where was the training conducted?*

*What was involved in the training? Knowledge, skill, or performance focused*

*Was there any incentive for participating?*

*Did the training involve an evaluation?*

#### **Supervision and Coaching**

Does the government offer supervision, coaching or mentoring to teachers involved in inclusive early childhood education? Tell me about how it operates?

#### **Performance Assessment**

How do you assess whether or not teachers are adhering to inclusive education implementation? How do you know if teachers are achieving the objective?

*If teacher assessments are carried out..*

*What are the specifics of the assessments? How are assessments carried out?  
Who performs the assessment? How do teachers receive feedback?*

### **Decision Support Data Systems**

Tell me about how the Ministry of Education carries out assessments on the organization for the purpose of achieving inclusive education? Is there a data collection and reporting system in place for the Ministry?

*How is the data collected used?*

*What system is in place for reporting back to participants?*

*Who conducts the assessments?*

*What information is collected?*

*What measures are being collected? (Number of children enrolled? Length of enrollment at center? Parent satisfaction?)*

### **Facilitative Administration**

Describe for me how administrative practices and procedures have been altered, if at all to accommodate inclusive education at the early childhood level?

*Policy revision?*

*School structures altered, new school built to accommodate children,*

*Training of supervisors and directors related to inclusion?*

*Incentive pay, new set of supervisors, trainers, new performance measures?*

### **Systems Intervention**

Tell me about the work done to prepare the larger education system and country for inclusive education.

*What type of training did administrative staff (Directors and Supervisors) receive to be able to be able to facilitate implementation?*

*How were resources to initiate inclusive education secured?*

*What is being done to ensure that inclusive education is sustained?*

### **Leadership**

Tell me about the connection between the leadership of the Ministry and teachers in the classroom.

*What communication channels are there for reporting success, challenges and concerns?*

*What mechanisms are in place to respond to success, challenges and concerns?*

*When there is a need for agreement on issues how is a decision made?*

*When the need arises for changing policies how is this communicated to members involved in implementing inclusive education?*

## **Appendix E**

### **Observation Protocol**

**Assessing the process of implementing inclusive education at the early childhood level in Trinidad and Tobago**

**Start of Observation:**

**Site:**

**End of Observation:**

**Length of observation:**

**Date:**

**General Description of what is being observed**

**Descriptive**

**Reflective**

**Inclusive components**

## **IMPLEMENTATION COMPONENTS**

### **Competency Drivers**

Selection of Staff

Training

Coaching

Performance Assessment

### **Organization Drivers**

Systems Intervention

Facilitative Administration

Decision Support  
Data Systems

### **Leadership Drivers**

Technical

Adaptive

**Appendix F**  
**Document Summary Form**  
**Assessing the process of implementing inclusive education at the early childhood**  
**level in Trinidad and Tobago**

Name or description of Document:	Site:
	Document number

Event or contact to associate document	Date received:
	Date:
Significance of Document	
Summary of contents	
Implementation Framework Components	
Competency Drivers	
Staff Selection	Training
Coaching	Performance Assessment
Organization Drivers	
System Intervention	Facilitative Administration
Decision Support Data System	
Leadership	
Adaptive	Facilitative



## Appendix G

### Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Education Application Form: Permission to Conduct Research in Schools



GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO  
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

#### APPLICATION FORM- PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS

- For one school only, the application is submitted through the Principal of the school who endorses it, and submits to the School Supervisor III of the District.
- For national or District scope, the application is submitted directly to the School Supervisor III who will engage in extensive consultation with other Units/ Divisions of the Ministry of Education for investigation, comments and recommendations. Criteria being met, reservation approval is granted.
- All applications will be evaluated according to the criteria laid down by the Ministry of Education.
- Applicants are advised to submit their application at least two months in advance of their intended programme implementation.
- All applicants who have been issued with reservation approvals will be invited to sign an agreement with the Ministry of Education at the appropriate District Office. This agreement will contain the Terms and Conditions of the approval granted.
- Approved users should have their copy of their signed approval and agreement for presentation to school officials upon request.
- *The contact person given in this form must be the legal entity that will be offered the agreement with the MOE, should the application be successful.*

Please provide full answers to the following questions in complete sentences with no acronyms or other abbreviations.

#### **1 Applicant Details**

a) Name of Student conducting Research - PRINT  
Lenisa N Joseph

b) University/Educational Institute & Department  
University of Maryland College Park, Department of Counselling, Higher Education and Special Education

c) Name of Research Study – PRINT  
ASSESSING THE PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY AT THE EARLY CHILDHOOD LEVEL IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

#### d) Contact Information

Address	62 Back Street, Tunapuna
Phone Number	1-868- 762-7548
Email:	lenisaj@umd.edu

e) Department Head/Research Supervisor/Course Facilitator

PRINT Joan Lieber, Ph.D.

SIGN Joan Lieber

## 2 Rationale

What are the underlying reasons for developing this study?

International policy initiatives such as The Declaration on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1990); Education for All (EFA) (UNESCO, 1990; UNESCO 2000); the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994); and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2006) are some of the major international declarations stipulating the establishment of inclusive early childhood care and education policies and programs. While countries have created and implemented policies related to inclusive education, international education organizations suggest that current efforts are not working because developing countries lack the economic, social, and technical capacity to successfully accomplish the goals and expectations of the EFA and Salamanca documents (WHO, 2011; USAID, 2004; Education International, 2010), which would thereby ensure implementation of the policy. Examining the implementation of inclusive early education policy in Trinidad and Tobago offers an opportunity to understand inclusive early childhood education in one developing country in the Commonwealth Caribbean region.

Findings from this research could inform policies and practices related to young children with special needs in Trinidad and Tobago and other countries. This study will provide valuable context about the factors which influence inclusive education policy and implementation processes are influenced by realities of this particular country. Basing the study in Trinidad and Tobago will also provide insight into how the socio economic and political realities of the country are impacting implementation.

## 3 Objectives

What are the intentions of the study?

The study will investigate the implementation of an inclusive education policy at the early childhood care and education level in Trinidad and Tobago. The study will also examine the influence of organizational departments' interpretations of the inclusive education policy on actual educational practices at the early childhood level. The study will also explain how children with special needs are being included in early childhood care and education settings. The following research questions guide the study:

1. How is the documented framework for implementation of Trinidad and Tobago's inclusive education policy related to early childhood care and education being understood and implemented at various organizational levels?
2. How have international policies and statements influenced the development of inclusive education policy related to early childhood care and education?
3. What supports and challenges exist for stakeholders implementing inclusive education at the early childhood level in Trinidad and Tobago?
4. What does inclusion of a child with a disability look like in the early childhood care and education setting?

## 4 Target Group(s)

Study Targets?

Stakeholder group – tick one	Students	Teachers	Parents
Level (students only)	Early Childhood	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Gender	No specification	No specification	
Group size	10 at two Centers	40	
Number of schools	8		

##### 5 Duration (dates and times)

Data Collection will last from February 2013 and end in April 2013.

February 13 to 28 Interviews with government officials, which will last approximately one hour. Date and time to be agreed upon with each individual.

February 13 to 28 Survey of teachers. The entire survey and demographic section should take no more than 20 minutes to complete.

February 13 to 28 Review of Documents related to the implementation of inclusive education

March 2013 Observations at the two early childhood centers will be conducted between 8:30 am to 1:30 pm for a 3-4 week period or until data saturation.

##### 6 Expected Outcomes

Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• NOT APPLICABLE</li></ul>
Psychosocial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• NOT APPLICABLE</li></ul>
Behavioural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• NOT APPLICABLE</li></ul>
Other <u>Research Objectives</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inform policies and practices related to young children with disabilities and special needs in Trinidad and Tobago and other countries.</li><li>• Provide context about the factors which influence inclusive education policy and implementation processes</li><li>• Provide insight into how the socio economic and political realities of the country are impacting early implementation</li></ul>

##### 7 Methodology

Give a brief description of the implementation process.

1. **Interviews with Government Officials.** These participants will be asked to participate in an interview, which will last approximately one hour. The list of interview questions for government officials is attached. The investigator, to ensure confidentiality will personally transcribe recordings and use codes for the names of the participants in transcriptions.
2. **Survey Teachers at all pilot inclusive early childhood Centers.** These participants will be asked to complete a survey along with demographic information. The entire survey and demographic section should last no more than 20 minutes to complete the survey is attached. To ensure confidentiality each location is matched with an alphanumeric code, which will appear on the survey document. In addition teachers at the Centers will be assigned a numeric code, which matches with their name and position.
3. **Interviews with 2 teachers selected from two pilot Centers.** These two teachers will participate in open-ended interviews. The interviews should last approximated 30 minutes. The questions guiding the interviews are attached.
4. **Observations** (one teacher and their assigned group of children at each of two selected early childhood Centers). The observations will be conducted between 8:30 am to 1:30 pm for a 3-4 week period or until data saturation. I will be observing for ways in which teachers interact with children who have disabilities and those who do not, as well as how the children interact with each other. Observations will be anonymous, as I do not require any identifying information about individual children. An observation guide is attached. My presence in the Center should not interrupt the daily instructional activities.

5. **Document Analysis.** Analysis of publicly available documents will also be part of the data collection method. In cases where public documents carry identifiers of participants I will delete/obscure the identifiers.

### 8 Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

Please list the method(s) that will be used for monitoring and evaluation of your programmes' success. Successful indicators that my research has been successfully executed are

1. 80% and over return of completed survey document distributed to teachers at the eight pilot inclusive early childhood centers.
  - POS and Environs: La Puerta Early Childhood Care and Education Center
  - St George East: El Socorro South Early Childhood Center
  - North Eastern: Sangre Grande Early Childhood Center
  - Victoria: La Romaine Early Childhood Center
  - Caroni: St. Sylvans' Early Childhood Center
  - South Eastern: St. Mary's Early Childhood Center
  - St Patrick: Santa Flora Early Childhood Center
  - Tobago: Buccoo Early Childhood Center
2. Interviews with 5 government officials with responsibility for implementing inclusive education policy.
3. Observations conducted at two of the eight early childhood centers
  - a. Interviews with teachers at the two centers
4. Review of documents related to inclusive education.

### 9 Cost/ Resources

#### a) Funding sought from MOE

What is your budget breakdown for the proposed programme? Not Applicable. I am not seeking funding from the MOE for this research project.

Budget item (give details)	Amount (\$TTD)
<b>Total - \$</b>	<b>0</b>

#### b) Contributions

Contributions (financial or other) from other sources? Not Applicable

Source e.g. private enterprise, community	Nature of contribution	Amount \$
<b>Total contribution - \$ 0</b>		

Total costs of initiative \$ \_\_\_\_\_ TTD



**10 Expected input from School/ Ministry**

What input does your initiative need from the School or Ministry? (e.g. Supervision, Security, Equipment, Finances)

- At the schools I will like to have access to a space where teachers can provide informed consent and complete the survey confidentially.

**11 Other Relevant Information**

Please attach (with this application) all questionnaires and other relevant documents/materials to be used in the study.

Attached materials.

- Consent form for Ministry officials being interviewed
- Consent form for Teachers being surveyed
- Consent form for Teachers being observed and interviewed
- Consent form for Parents
- Survey Document
- Interview protocol
- Observation protocol
- Letter to Parents
- Approval to conduct research from University of Maryland College Park
- Letter of Request to conduct research

**12 Declaration – Agency Representative (Contact Person)**

I declare that:

- The information given by me in this application is complete and correct
- I will notify MOE, in writing, of any changes to this information, within seven (7) days of that change occurring.

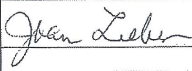
I understand that:

- The information on this form allows MOE to assess the proposed initiative for access to schools

I understand that:

- Giving false or misleading information is a serious offence.
- Any information obtained (about any individual participant/school) through this study is to be held in the strictest confidence.
- All findings of this study are to be made available to the Ministry of Education on completion of the research study.

**13 Signature**

Name of Applicant (PLEASE PRINT)	Lenisa N Joseph
Signature	
Course Facilitator/Research Supervisor (PLEASE PRINT)	Joan Lieber
Signature	
Date	

## Appendix H

### Letter of Approval to Conduct Research



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION  
EDUCATIONAL PLANNING DIVISION  
CHEPSTOW HOUSE, 56 FREDERICK STREET, PORT-OF-SPAIN  
TEL/FAX: 625-0806

February 11<sup>TH</sup> 2013

The Head  
Early Childhood Care & Education Division  
MTS Plaza  
Aranguez Road  
Aranguez

Dear Madam,

This is to inform you that **Ms. Lenisa N. Joseph** has been granted permission to conduct research at the following Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Centres:-


1. La Puerta
2. El Socorro South
3. Sangre Grande
4. La Romaine
5. St. Sylvans
6. St. Mary's
7. Santa Flora
8. Buccoo Early Childhood Care and Education Center, Tobago.

**Ms. Joseph** is a postgraduate student at the University of Maryland, College Park, in the Department of Counseling Higher Education and Special Education, reading for a PhD degree.  
Her research project is entitled "**Assessing the process of implementing inclusive education policy at the Early Childhood level in Trinidad and Tobago**".

**Ms. Joseph's** research shall be conducted during this academic year, in this regard, you are kindly asked to inform the Administrators/Teachers within your centers to expect her. Participation is voluntary, however the Administrators/Teachers cooperation in assisting her would be greatly appreciated.

Should you require additional information please contact Mrs. Huldah Balchan-Bissoo, Research Officer I, Educational Planning Division at 625 – 1160.

Yours Respectfully

  
.....  
Mrs. Lenor Baptiste-Simmons  
Director  
Educational Planning Division

## Appendix I

### Letter to Parents

University of Maryland College Park  
Department of Counseling Higher Education and Special Education

Name and Address of School

Date

Dear Parent,

I am a graduate student in the Department of Counseling Higher Education and Special Education at the University of Maryland. I am presently conducting a research project under the supervision of Dr. Joan Lieber in order to fulfill the requirements of my degree.

This study examines how inclusive education is being implemented at the early childhood level in Trinidad and Tobago. Examining how policies that affect children with disabilities are implemented increases the likelihood of achieving better implementation and greater gains of children with disabilities. Your teacher's (Miss \_\_\_\_ ) class has been selected to observe how inclusion is happening in the classroom.

Your permission is required to include your child in the study. The observations are anonymous I do not require any identifying information about your child. I will observe your child along with other children in his/her group during the course of the day for 10 days to assess inclusive education. Each of the 10 visits will last the duration of the morning session. I will be looking for: The types of accommodations the teacher uses for children with disabilities and how teachers and children without disabilities work with children who have disabilities.

If you are willing to allow your child to be observed for this study, please sign and return the attached consent form by (date).

For further information regarding this study please do not hesitate to contact me (local number) 762-7548 or Dr. Joan Lieber (overseas) 1- (301) 405 6467 at the Department of Counseling, Higher Education and Special Education.

Sincerely

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Lenisa Joseph

## Appendix J

### Parents: Consent Form

#### Parents: Consent Form

Page 1 of 2

Initials \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Project Title</b>	Assessing the process of implementing inclusive education policy at the early childhood level in Trinidad and Tobago
<b>Purpose of the Study</b>	This research is being conducted by <b>Lenisa Joseph</b> , a doctoral student at the University of Maryland, College Park under the supervision of Dr. Joan Lieber. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because your child attends a school that is implementing inclusive education. The purpose of this research project is to describe the process of implementing the policy and identify how children are included in the early childhood setting.
<b>Procedures</b>	The procedures involve observation. The observations will be conducted between 8:30 am to 1:30 pm for a 3-4 week period, a total of 50 to 75 hours. My presence in the classroom should not disrupt the daily instructional activities. I will be observing for ways in which teachers interact with children who have disabilities and those who do not, as well as how the children interact with each other. If you do not give permission to observe your child I will ask teachers during the interview process to as best a possible describe how they accommodate children with and without disabilities in the classroom.
<b>Potential Risks and Discomforts</b>	To protect your child from being identified or linked to the center I will not use the name of the center in any of my reports. I do not require any identifying information about your child.
<b>Potential Benefits</b>	There are no direct benefits to you or your child for your child's participation. We hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of how inclusion has been implemented in Trinidad and Tobago.
<b>Confidentiality</b>	Any potential loss of confidentiality will be minimized by <b>storing data in a locked cabinet, and on a password protected computer.</b>  If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.

Page 2 of 2

<b>Right to Withdraw and Questions</b>	Your consent for your child's participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose for your child to not to take part at all. If you decide for your child to participate in this research, you may stop that participation at any time. If you decide for your child not to participate in
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### Parents: Consent Form

	<p>this study or if you stop your child from participating at any time, you and your child will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.</p> <p>If you decide to stop your child from taking part in the study, or if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, please contact the investigator:  <b>Lenisa N Joseph</b>  <b>Local contact information (January to March 2013)</b>  <b>Address:</b> 62 Back Street Tunapuna, Trinidad and Tobago  <b>Telephone number:</b> 1-868- 762-7548  <b>E-mail address:</b> lenisaj@umd.edu</p> <p><b>US contact information</b>  <b>Address:</b> 2200 Montgomery Street, Silver Spring, MD 20910  <b>Telephone number:</b> 1-240-593-7095  <b>E-mail address:</b> lenisaj@umd.edu</p>	
<b>Participant Rights</b>	<p>If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact:</p> <p><b>University of Maryland College Park</b>  <b>Institutional Review Board Office</b>  <b>1204 Marie Mount Hall</b>  <b>College Park, Maryland, 20742</b>  <b>E-mail:</b> <a href="mailto:irb@umd.edu">irb@umd.edu</a>  <b>Telephone:</b> 301-405-0678</p> <p>This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.</p>	
<b>Statement of Consent</b>	<p>Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to allow your child to participate in this research study. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form.</p>	
<b>Signature and Date</b>	NAME OF CHILD [Please Print]	
	SIGNATURE OF PARENT	
	DATE	

## Appendix K

### Code Books: Implementation and Key Influences

Codebook for Implementation Framework		
Drivers	Components	Definition
<b>Competency</b>  Mechanisms to develop improve and sustain one's ability to implement an intervention as intended in order to benefit children, families and communities	<b>Staff Selection</b>	Selection, through an active implementation lens. Selection refers to the purposeful process of recruiting, interviewing, and hiring <i>'with the end in mind'</i> .
	<b>Training</b>	Training through an <i>active implementation lens</i> is defined as purposeful, skill-based, and adult-learning informed processes designed to support teachers and staff in acquiring the skills and information needed to begin using a new program or innovation.
	<b>Coaching</b>	Coaching is defined as regular, embedded professional development designed to help teachers and staff uses the program or innovation as intended.
	<b>Performance Assessment</b>	Performance assessment refers to measuring the degree to which teachers or staff are able to use the intervention or instructional practices as intended. Performance assessment (fidelity) measures the extent to which an innovation is implemented as intended. Did we do what we said we would do?
<b>Organization</b>  Mechanisms to create and sustain hospitable organizational and system environments for effective services.  These components need to be in place to ensure the larger system has the capacity to support and sustain the new practices.	<b>Systems Intervention</b>	The Systems Intervention Driver is focused on the external variables, policies, environments, systems or structures that influence or have impact on an implementing organization.
	<b>Facilitative Administration</b>	The Facilitative Administration Driver focuses on the internal processes, policies, regulations, and structures over which a school, district or implementing organization has some control
	<b>Decision Support Data System</b>	The Decision Support Data System (DSDS) is a system for identifying, collecting, and analyzing data that are useful to the teacher, school, district and other implementing environments.
<b>Leadership</b>  Focuses on providing the right leadership strategies for the types of leadership challenges. These leadership challenges often emerge as part of the change management process needed to make decisions, provide guidance, and support organization functioning.	<b>Technical</b>	Technical challenges are those characterized by pretty clear agreement on a definition of the dimensions of the problem at hand. Technical challenges can be managed.
	<b>Adaptive</b>	Adaptive challenges aren't "solved" through traditional management approaches, because adaptive challenges involve legitimate, yet competing, perspectives — different views of the problem and different perspectives on what might constitute a viable solution.

*Key Influences in the Initiation and Maintenance of Early Childhood Inclusion*

<b>Key Influence</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>Collaborative Relationships</b>	The formal and informal agreements between agencies to work together in the provision of inclusive services.
<b>Community Influence*</b>	Influence exerted by community members (e.g., families) who are not employees of the school district or other agencies such as Head Start.
<b>Family</b>	Family as Initiator (initiation): The initial influence exerted by one or more families of children with disabilities on inclusive practices in the early childhood special education program. Family Support and Partnership (maintenance): The support, training, or participation opportunities for parents of children involved with the inclusive program.
<b>Key Personnel*</b>	The influence of a specific person or people employed by the program on inclusive practices in the program. Influence may be ongoing, may be sparked by an event (hearing a presentation), may be sparked by previous experience, or may wane (e.g., a charismatic leader whose interests turn to a new innovation).
<b>Organizational Structure*</b>	Structures that exist within a district and between different agencies so that people can communicate, collaborate, and share resources. This includes formal interagency agreements.
<b>National, State, Local Policies and How They're Enacted*</b>	Policies established by national (Head Start or OSEP) or state agencies that influence practices that occur in local programs. Examples of these influences are the LRE provisions from P.L. 94-142, the Head Start "10%" mandate for children with disabilities, and state or regional level administrators' enactment or enforcement of policies at the classroom level.
<b>Shared Vision*</b>	The transformation of the concept of inclusion that occurs over time among those who design, deliver, or use inclusive education so that it includes the views of all participants.
<b>Training and External Support*</b>	Any money, training, other type of support, or special recognition beyond regular program money or support that is associated with the startup of a program.

*\*Note.* Adapted from "Key Influences on the Initiation and Implementation of Inclusive Preschool Programs," by J. Lieber, et al., 2000, *Exceptional Children*, 67, p. 83.

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